

Teaching Beginners to Read

Alice M. Meeker



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Teaching Beginners to Read

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August, 1960

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Contents

INTRODUCTION: THE CHILD AND THE TEACHER	1
Chapter 1. LISTENING AND SPEAKING AS AN AID TO READING	3
Repetition as a Basis for Later Reading	4
Learning to Listen to Others	5
Storytelling	5
Dealing with Troublemakers	7
Chapter 2. WRITING STORIES FOR LISTENING	8
Presenting the Stories	9
Repetition and Onomatopoeia	10
Sound Effects	11
Elaboration of a Simple Theme	13
Elaboration of a Commonplace Occurrence	15
Chapter 3. "TEACHER, I CAN READ!"	16
The First Reading Experiences	17
The Reading Chart	18
Reading Familiar Words	19
Charts as Supplements to Preprimers	20
Importance of Repetition	20
Phonics	21
Various Uses of Word Cards	22
Charts and Activities by Months	23
Chapter 4. THE HOOK AND THE STICK	40
Writing One's Name	40
Why Manuscript?	42
Charts	42
Spacing	43
Handedness	44
Need for Supervision	44

Chapter 5. THE GROWTH OF ABILITY TO READ

45

- Preparations for the First Preprimer 46
- Preparations for the Second Preprimer 47
- Phonics 47
- The Alphabet 48
- The Child's Dictionary 49
- Reading the First Primer 50
- Evaluating Individual Progress 51
- Seatwork 52

Chapter 6. DAY BY DAY IN THE CLASSROOM: LESSON PLANS

57

- Lesson Plan I : American Indian Theme 58
- Lesson Plan II : Time and Weather 61
- Lesson Plan III: A Trip to the Zoo 65
- Lesson Plan IV: The Music Box 67

Chapter 7. DAY BY DAY IN THE CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING INTERESTS

69

- Characteristics of a Good Teacher 70
- The Well-Ordered Room 71
- Contacts with Parents 72

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

75

Introduction: The Child and the Teacher

That year wasn't much of a Christmas as far as presents went. Mrs. Chester knew that jobs were scarce and that parents worried more about coal and food than they did about Santa Claus; so the classroom days were filled with stories, songs, and making inexpensive little gifts for the family. Money or no, Christmas is a time for giving from the heart, and when the last moment of the last day came, Mrs. Chester patted each little head and wished each child a Merry Christmas; Mary lingered behind pretending to hunt for her mittens. In her pocket she had a crumpled little package wrapped in tissue and fastened with holly stickers. She pulled it out, held it in her hand a bit, and smoothed the edges caressingly, in anticipation of Mrs. Chester's happiness to come. "Don't open it until Christmas, put it under your tree. It's something you can use and you'll like it. Wait till you see!" She broke into a broad smile, thrust out the present and turned away. At the door she blew a kiss to her teacher and skipped down the hall, too full of glee to walk.

On Christmas Day Mrs. Chester unfolded the tissue and saw her present. It was a man's large white cotton handkerchief, carefully washed and ironed. Across one corner in careful manuscript lettering and embroidered in red darning cotton was the uneven inscription,

R E M E M B E R M E .

Mrs. Chester has never forgotten Mary. More than a decade later that handkerchief still lies in her dresser drawer, and that laborious red stitching done with love seems more precious a gift than all the candy and perfume received in later years.

Effective teaching is a combination of idealism and practicality, in which laughter and affection go hand in hand with control and competence. It is a complex job that looks deceptively simple to the casual eye, and, much like other situations, is only as good as the person who guides it. In this case that person is the teacher.

The mature adult who is our elementary school teacher has the good sense to worry about tomorrow. She does her thinking ahead of time, budgets her income, plans for June in September and patiently plots her days toward the ultimate goals of learning.

Her pupil is just a child. He has few yesterdays to draw upon, and small concern for tomorrow. Every day is a new adventure; it is today that matters, and it is today upon which the teacher must build.

Under these two philosophies, the natural hedonism of a child and the teacher's concern for tomorrow, lies the curriculum. This course of study serves as the over-all plan for educational advancement in a given grade. It progresses by logical steps until a desired goal has been reached or another level attained. All of this seems very simple on paper, but it is the child himself who alters the best-laid plans, and the child is more important than the curriculum. Twenty may follow the plan of learning as others have done before them; five may not, for one reason or another. This fact alone is sufficient to call forth all the skill that a good teacher may possess.

It is said that Michelangelo once passed before a mass of rough marble and viewed it with contemplative eyes. "Let me take it," he said, "and release the angel I see imprisoned there." Knowing the skill of the sculptor, his patience and vision, no one could doubt that beauty would be freed from shapeless bulk.

How often a teacher looks at a child with perceptive eyes and envisions what he may become in the years ahead. She may patiently correct the spelling, praise the effort, aid the thinking, and with a hand on his shoulder repeat to herself the words of Gibran, "If he [the teacher] is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."

There is a time to plan and a time to work; there is a time to laugh and a time to be firm; there is a time to encourage and a time to wait. All of these things the teacher must somehow understand, and she must seize each day and use it with her eyes on tomorrow and her heart with the child before her.

Listening and Speaking as an Aid to Reading

Mrs. McCullom was a good storyteller and her class always eagerly awaited the moments before school closed, for that was story time. The afternoon sun slanted in the windows and gave a soft glow to everything it touched. All the desks had been cleared, the scraps picked up, the plants watered, and the hats and coats hung ready in the closet—but now were the magic moments of listening. Buddy sat closest to the teacher where he could put a hand on her chair now and then as if to reassure himself. On the other side Arlene sat quietly, her sensitive face reflecting himself. Right in front of Mrs. McCullom sat Bill with his every mood of thought. Right in front of Mrs. McCullom sat Bill with his cold blue eyes, his indomitable cowlick and his truculent expression. Bill was never restful and rarely cooperative, but something about him won one's heart.

"And the big wolf came to the little pig's house of straw, and he took a deep breath" (everybody around Mrs. McCullom took a deep breath, too) "and he huffed, and he puffed, and he BLEW THE HOUSE DOWN! And then he ate the poor little pig." (The class sat serious and silent.)

"And when he was all done, he went on down the road to where the second little pig had built his house of sticks. 'Little pig,' he said, 'come out or I will huff and puff and blow your house in.' And the little pig didn't say a word. So the big bad wolf took a deep breath (everybody else did, too) and he huffed, and he puffed, and he BLEW THE HOUSE IN! And then he ate the poor little pig." (Silence with some uneasy squirmings.)

"And when he was all done, he went on down the road. . . ." It was too much for Bill's objective nature. Without even batting an eye or moving a muscle he spoke with hostile conviction, "Here comes that pie-faced old billy goat of a wolf again! It's time somebody knocked his block off for a change, the dirty skunk!"

He spoke for them all, and nobody could have said it better.

REPETITION AS A BASIS FOR LATER READING

Without a thoroughgoing preparation in the art of contemplative listening in the primary grades, one cannot expect creative work later on. The stories, poems, rhymes, and music heard in the kindergarten and first grade give the child a background for that most important phase of language arts—reading. The child who listens to a repetitive story like “The Old Woman and Her Pig” is better prepared to follow a similar pattern in a primary reader. The child who listens to poetry hears likenesses and differences in the endings of words that form the rhyme pattern. Here is the basis of phonics and spelling. The titles listed below are excellent for repetition.

POEMS

- “I’d Like to Be a Lighthouse,” Rachel Field
- “Trains,” James S. Tippet
- “Fuzzy Wuzzy, Creepy Crawly,” Lillian Schulz
- “Ice,” Dorothy Aldis
- “Thaw,” Eunice Tietjens¹
- “The Merry-Go-Round,” Dorothy Baruch²

CHORAL SPEAKING³

- “The Train,” Eva Kunkle
- “Clickety-Clack,” Eleanor Newcomb
- “The Ducks,” Dorothy K. Stone
- “Peter Rabbit,” L. W. Simpkins

STORIES⁴

- “The Old Woman and Her Pig”
- “The Story of the Three Little Pigs”
- “Teeny-Tiny”
- “Henny-Penny”

RHYMES

- “Words Are Funny,” Alice Salaff⁵

¹ These first five poems may be found in *Child Craft* (Chicago: Field Enterprises, 1954), *Poems of Early Childhood*, I, 107, 102, 95, 148, 115.

² Dorothy Baruch, “The Merry-Go-Round,” in May H. Arbuthnot (ed.), *Children and Books* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1947), p. 129.

³ The selections from this group may be found in *Choral Speaking and Speech Improvement* (Darien, Conn.: Educational Publishing Company, 1945), pp. 27, 26, 23, 43.

⁴ The selections in this group may be found in Joseph Jacobs (ed.), *English Fairy Tales* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892).

⁵ Alice Salaff, *Words Are Funny* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1952), 93 pp.

LEARNING TO LISTEN TO OTHERS

Listening for sound and rhythm is universally important, but learning to listen to one's peers, while less stimulating, is a social necessity which must be initiated early. The teacher should plan daily for the oral participation of her pupils somewhere in her program and, conversely, for a listening situation. Early in the morning is the best time to encourage discussion on the part of the young child, for the tie with home is still fresh. The child who brings something to share orally, such as a toy, picture, or souvenir, is practicing sentence structure and using vocabulary. The child who hears the report is learning to listen and evaluate. The experienced teacher has developed simple techniques designed to intrigue the shy youngster into expression. A child of any age loves the world about him—sea shells, milkweed pods, bird feathers, dandelions, turtles, and cocoons: things simultaneously familiar and wonderful that can be held in his hand, put in his pocket, or stuffed in the front of his shirt. The city pupil may bring a miniature truck, a favorite doll, or a colorful picture book. All this can stimulate free oral expression.

Some youngsters will bring road maps, post cards, and souvenirs of their family trips. Any discussions of these will necessarily widen the social studies horizon through the medium of speech.

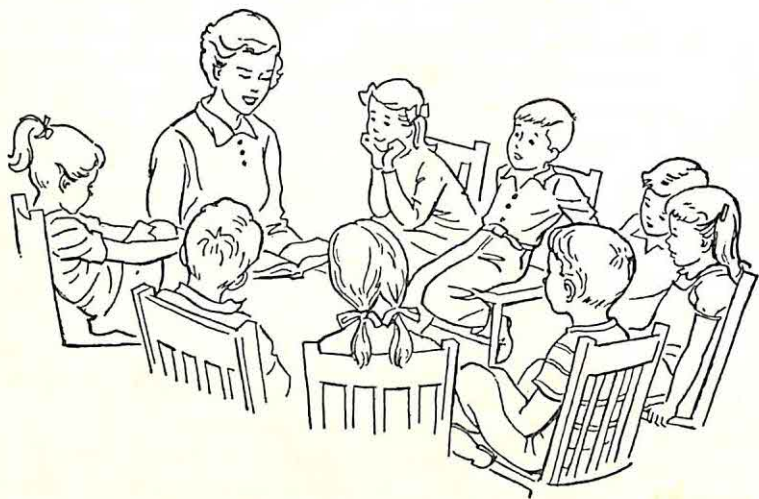
Once this pattern has become familiar, it is wise to move on to the next stage of oral expression—a discussion with no obvious visual aid. This may center about the home, such as a new baby sister, a visit to the pet shop, or a favorite Christmas toy. All of this requires an enlarged vocabulary that responds well to constant encouragement from the teacher.

There is an orderly sequence of events each day which makes children feel they belong to the class group. This group readiness for the next language route is as necessary as individual readiness. Children must learn to live with others in order to derive benefits from school life, and listening is as much a part of learning as the contribution of speech, sometimes even more. It might be said that the very act of receptive listening can be even more important than the material heard.

STORYTELLING

The quality of that material rests with the teacher. Before introducing a new story or poem, she will have read it herself first, not once but several times, and have thought seriously about the method of presentation which she would use. Then, before reading it to the group, she must establish certain rules of procedure. It must be well understood that the little audience is to be silent, each child in a relaxed, comfortable position of his own choice. Having said this, *the teacher must see that it is enforced*. Any child not conforming should be seated away from the group. Second,

her material should be both interesting and brief. Length and dullness is a lethal combination. Noises arise, mischief starts, and attention escapes. The teacher is a dramatic artist who uses her voice with subtleties of rate and pitch to express emotion, and her hands and facial expression to emphasize. She can never be wholly bound to a book; her memory and imagination will serve her more frequently if she has a large repertory of memorized stories.



Many a day will come when only listening will take the edge off a situation. High-pitched voices, restlessness, and irritability advise the teacher to stop the work at hand and say, "Put your heads down on your desks for a little while and shut your eyes and listen—and get v-e-r-y quiet inside and I'll tell you the story of 'The Bed That Walked Away.'⁶ Once upon a time long, long, ago . . ."

Soon bright little eyes look up at her from here and there, and much of the tension leaves. When she finishes, all the heads pop up and chorus, "Tell us another!" But this time it must be a short one; perhaps a poem like

TWENTY FROGGIES⁷

Twenty froggies went to school
Down beside a rushy pool.
Twenty little coats of green,
Twenty vests all white and clean.

"We must be in time," said they.
"First we study, then we play.

⁶ See page 10.

⁷ George Cooper, "Twenty Froggies," in *Child Craft*, I, 159.

That is how we keep the rule,
When we froggies go to school."

Master Bullfrog, brave and stern,
Called his classes in their turn,
Taught them how to nobly strive,
Also how to leap and dive;

Taught them how to dodge a blow
From the sticks that bad boys throw.
Twenty froggies grew up fast,
Bullfrogs they became at last.

Polished in a high degree,
As each froggie ought to be,
Now they sit on other logs,
Teaching other little frogs.

GEORGE COOPER

DEALING WITH TROUBLEMAKERS

"This is all very well," the doubtful teacher may say. "But what do you do about the one or two who deliberately cause a disturbance? Because of them the rest just can't listen!" No one will dispute that fact; the problem is what to do?

The first thing is to anticipate your troublemakers and put them in a position of least advantage to them. This can be done with a smile as the group prepares for the next activity. If Mary persists in nudging Lois, try saying "Mary, I saved this chair for you so we can work together." This removes Mary from Lois and puts her near the teacher. A simple "Joe, would you like to come and sit by me?" will solve the problem of mysterious noises during story time. At least the noises no longer will be mysterious. If it becomes necessary to stop a story or singing period to settle an unforeseen disruption, do so with as few words as possible, and see that you are obeyed. In a far corner of the room stands an isolated chair; point to it and tell George to sit there until he can learn to listen quietly with the group. When he is safely seated, ignore him and continue as before, letting him sit there until you feel he is ready to return and do what is expected of him. In the first grade, friendly group cooperation should win approval. Rebellion, temper tantrums, and sulking should bring only firm but quiet removal from the group. Consistent adherence to this discipline pattern will bring results. One or two troublemakers are to be expected and can be effectively coped with. If more than a few are in that category, the teacher must look first to herself.

2

Writing Stories for Listening

Stories come toward day's end. At that time the children hurry to get into position, each carrying his own little chair. Friends arrange to be with each other and two or three settle close to where the teacher will sit. While she closes books on her desk and puts some papers to one side, small hands pat with happy anticipation the seat of the big chair waiting for her.

In a minute the story has begun. Miss McPhail's voice is low and pleasantly conversational, and the group before her is quiet. "Once upon a time there was a little brown puppy dog . . ." Her words flow on and on, each emotion reflected in the intent little faces before her.

Suddenly there is a disruption in the back row. Johnnie scrambles to his feet despite the protests of his neighbors. He pauses long enough to wave his hand urgently in the air, "Wait, wait, don't say anything more till I get back!" and disappears into the hall.

They all wait. The children talk quietly to each other and a few chairs are adjusted. Down the long corridor comes the sound of hurrying feet, closer, closer, and into the classroom. Johnnie has reappeared. He catches his breath and with a single motion slides into his chair and announces the obvious, "I'm back. You can go on now." Everything begins again as casually as it was interrupted.

Moral: With a teacher who tells good stories, there are no bathroom problems.

Unless the story you tell fills the basic requirements for a first-grade group, you will have lost all its essential value as a teaching device. The story you choose should have these qualities:

1. Repetition
2. Familiar expressions ("once upon a time . . . all night long . . . long, long ago . . . there was once . . .")
3. Onomatopoeia (words that represent sounds: nibble, crackle, swish, click, and the like)

4. A vocabulary similar to that found in primers
5. A simple basic theme that may be elaborated by the teacher's imagination.

PRESENTING THE STORIES

The best stories are always *told*; reading from a book gives little of the rapport necessary for control and understanding of the listening group. You will need to learn the sequence of the story you will tell, being careful to preserve both rhythm and repetition.

First, the children listen to the story. By the next morning you will have typed it on the primer typewriter and made a copy for each child on the school duplicating machine. Thus every pupil gains extra reading material which is seasonal, is already interest-motivated, and suggests that it is a personal gift from the teacher. The teacher who thus uses a published story, however, must use one on which the copyright, if any, has expired. Any work that has been in print for fifty-six years or more is in the public domain.

Here is an example of an original story that the author has successfully used in her classroom for many years. Any teacher with imagination can write similar stories, using every unusual occurrence in the first grade as a theme for a new story. Such stories are built around the familiar interests of six-year-olds—a lost tooth, a new baby, or an airplane ride.

THE SANTA CLAUS MOUSE¹

It was the night before Christmas and Santa Claus was very tired. He had come to the last house. Soon he would be on his way home to Mrs. Santa Claus and all the little elves in his workshop. He filled a stocking for Jean and had a doll peeping out of the top. He filled a stocking for Jim and had a baseball in the top. He filled Baby's stocking and had a tiny brown dog peeping out of the top.

"I guess I will take a nap in this big warm chair before I turn my sled around to go home," said Santa Claus.

All at once he heard something!

"Santa Claus, what did you bring me?" asked a squeaky voice. "I want something for Christmas, too."

Santa Claus looked back of the chair and saw a tiny mouse.

"Oh, tiny mouse," said Santa, "I didn't know you lived here so I did not bring you anything."

Just then, Santa Claus put his hand in his pocket. He found a cheese sandwich Mrs. Santa Claus had given him.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all the stories in this chapter are the author's own.

"Tiny mouse, I do have something for you. I'll eat the bread and you may eat the cheese."

Santa Claus put the cheese on the floor by the Christmas tree.

"Good-bye! Merry Christmas!" called Santa Claus.

"Nibble, nibble, nibble," went tiny mouse. He ate and ate and ate. Then he heard the children coming down to see the tree.

Scamper, scamper, scamper went the mouse down a hole near the kitchen door.

"Who put a piece of cheese by our Christmas tree?" asked Jean.

You know, and I know, but we won't tell.

REPETITION AND ONOMATOPOEIA

Though "The Santa Claus Mouse" appears to have one purpose, amusement, it uses the opportunity to *repeat* phrases in order to make the story easier for the beginning reader:

"He filled a stocking for Jean and had a . . ."

"He filled a stocking for Jim and had a . . ."

"He filled Baby's stocking and had a . . ."

Familiar expressions are used: "All at once," "Just then," "He ate and ate and ate."

Onomatopoeic words are so much a part of a child's vocabulary that they belong in any child's story—"Nibble, nibble, nibble"; "Scamper, scamper, scamper."

THE BED THAT WALKED AWAY²

Once there was a little boy who did not want to go to bed. His mother called, "Bobby, it is time to go to bed."

Do you know what Bobby did? He put his hands over his ears because he did not want to go to bed.

His mother called, "Bobby, it is time to go to bed."

Do you know what Bobby did? He put his fingers in his ears because he did not want to go to bed.

Then Mother called, "Bobby Jones, it is time to go to bed."

Bobby knew he must go into the house when his mother said his two names.

"Here I am, Mother," said Bobby.

"You must go to bed without a story," said Mother. "It is so late."

² Author unknown.

Bobby went upstairs and took off one shoe and one sock. Then, he pulled out his box of blocks. He built a railroad station, a store, and was just starting a post office when something happened! He could not keep his eyes open. He held them open with his two hands. You know you cannot build and do this.

Just then Bobby's magic bed decided to walk away.

BUMPITY! BUMPITY! BUMP! The bed walked down the stairs.

Bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed walked down the street.

Bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed walked around the corner.

Bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed left town.

By this time Bobby could not stay awake. He looked for a pillow. All he could see was his block box. What a hard pillow!

"I wish my bed would come back," said Bobby.

Now, because it was a magic bed, it had ears. It heard Bobby's wish. A bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed came into town.

A bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed came up the street.

A bumpity, bumpity, bump. The bed came up the stairs.

And a **BUMPITY! BUMPITY! BUMPITY! BUMP!** The bed backed into the room.

Quickly, Bobby said his prayers, brushed his teeth, and jumped into bed before the bed could walk away again.

SOUND EFFECTS

"The Bed That Walked Away" also depends upon sound effects to hold the interest of the small listener. "Bumpity, bumpity, bump" is the phrase which helps the child follow the bed as it *travels* along. Here we are training him to follow the sequence of the story, an essential factor in beginning reading. The frequent repetition of phrases makes this a fine story to encourage children to retell. This is another essential phase in the background of a beginning reader. Note the old familiar refrain for a six-year-old, "it is time to go to bed" and the oft-repeated:

The bed walked down the stairs.

The bed walked down the street.

The bed walked around the corner.

THE EASTER HAT LADY

Once upon a time there was a lady who had three hundred Easter hats. Red hats, blue hats, and white hats—all packed in a huge box.

When the hat factory had moved away, the man said, "You like children. We do not want to move these Easter hats. Give them to your

little friends." The lady who liked children took the huge box home in her car. Then her sister came to the door.

"Please help me carry in these three hundred hats, Belinda," said Miss Betty.

"Three hundred hats! Who will wear them? Where will we put them in this tiny house? Are you going to sell hats?" Her sister was very angry.

"Come and help me and then I'll explain." Miss Betty opened the huge box.

Belinda began to carry armfuls of hats, red hats, blue hats, white hats.

Miss Betty began to carry armfuls of hats, red hats, blue hats, white hats.

Belinda made ten trips to the car; back and forth, back and forth, hats, hats, hats.

Miss Betty made twenty trips to the car; back and forth, back and forth, hats, hats, hats.

"Now," said Belinda, as she put the last hat on top of the piano, "where will we sit for the evening? How can we eat dinner?"

There were hats on the chairs, hats on the sofa, hats on the piano, hats on the footstool.

Miss Betty put all the hats in the living room, put the teakettle on to make some hot tea, and then sat in the kitchen rocking chair.

"These hats came from the hat factory. It is moving away. The man gave them to me because I like children. I'll have them come here and choose free Easter hats."

"What!" said her sister. "Three hundred children are coming to this house when I just cleaned it for Easter?"

"I'll have them come in the basement." As she sipped her tea, Miss Betty explained, "I'll send a note to the school and invite all the girls to come tomorrow to select their hats. How pretty they'll look on Easter morning!"

The next day Miss Betty sent a note to the school:

Dear Girls:

I have three hundred hats in the basement of my home at 10 Green Street. If you wish a free Easter hat come Friday between four and six.

Your friend,

Betty Burrows

That Friday the people on Green Street thought a parade had come to town. Down the street came tiny girls with middle-sized girls and tall girls. Some had red hair, some had black hair, some had blond hair, some had brown hair.

Some wore bright dresses, some wore dark dresses, some wore plaid

dressess. Behind the girls came several boys, a teacher, and the school custodian.

Miss Belinda was peeking out the upstairs window. She called downstairs, "Betty, boys are coming. Now I know we'll have some trouble. Oh, why did you ever set up that hat shop?"

"Come downstairs and help me greet the children, Belinda," said Miss Betty.

Then the fun began! There were so many children that Miss Betty had to go out in the yard to meet them. "I've set up mirrors and tables and chairs. You may choose any hat you wish. They are all round, they all have streamers, and they come in only three colors, red, white, and blue. No exchanges. The hat you take home will be the one you will keep. Ten children may come at a time."

"There are two hundred girls and ten boys," said Miss James, the teacher in charge.

"Then we will have one hundred hats left," said Miss Betty.

"But," said the teacher, "some have sisters too young to come and these boys have little sisters. May they choose hats for their sisters?"

Mr. White, the custodian, spoke. "I have seven granddaughters. May I have seven hats?"

"Yes indeed," said Miss Betty. "You are a good friend to all the children."

Miss Belinda found it was so much fun to help the children choose their hats that she decided to invite them all to return on Easter Sunday for an Easter egg hunt in the woods back of the house.

What a happy Easter that was! If you had been riding down Green Street on Easter Sunday you would have enjoyed the sight. Three hundred girls were walking to the egg hunt. Some wore red hats; some wore blue hats; some wore white hats. They were all round, with streamers down the back, and the little girls who wore them were all smiling. Miss Betty, the Easter Hat Lady, watched them coming, and she was smiling too.

ELABORATION OF A SIMPLE THEME

We have stated that a story should have a simple basic theme elaborated by the teacher's imagination. "The Easter Hat Lady" illustrates the fact that a pupil or a teacher may have a rather commonplace experience, relate it to the class, and from it evolve a story. In this instance, the teacher was actually the recipient of three hundred Easter hats given to her by a hat factory which was closing. As she watched the children coming to school in their red, white, and blue hats she decided to relate it to the reading lesson. Colors are always a part of basic reading instruction. Children are always eager to read material written in letter form,

"Dear Girls: I have three hundred hats." And the specific number of times a thing happens always intrigues them: "Belinda made ten trips to the car; . . . Miss Betty made twenty trips to the car."

THE WITCH IN THE TREE

Jim liked his teacher. Every day he stayed to wash the blackboards, sharpen the pencils, and arrange the books on the library table.

One day he stayed later because it was Halloween. After the party he put all the chairs in place, washed the tables, washed the blackboards, sharpened the pencils, and arranged the books on the library table. He also took down the Halloween pictures and paper chains and helped Miss Jackson hang the new pictures on the bulletin board.

Then he stopped at the store to buy a pumpkin. He was going to make a jack-o'-lantern. As he walked along with his pumpkin he decided to buy batteries for his flashlight. You know a flashlight is safer than a candle in a jack-o'-lantern.

By the time he started home it was growing dark. When he went past his grandmother's house, it was hard to see as he looked toward her garden.

When he went past his uncle's house, he couldn't see the garage in the back yard. Darker and darker it grew. He could not see the school as he looked back, he could not see the railroad gates as he looked ahead.

All at once Jim stopped. He saw something. It was black. It was up in a tree. It was hanging over the road. What could he do? How could he get home? This big black something might come out of the tree. He waited and waited to see it fly away. It did not fly. It did not move.

"What can I do?" thought Jim. "I have never seen one before. Maybe if I run fast enough I can get home before she gets her broom started."

So Jim ran as fast as he could. He ran past the church. He ran past the post office. He ran past the pet shop. He even ran past the candy shop. He never stopped running till he reached home.

His mother was standing at the door. "Jim, where have you been?"

"Please, Mother, shut the door. Then I will tell you."

Mother shut the door. She looked at Jim and said, "You need some milk and cookies. Then we will talk."

Jim ate four cookies. He drank two glasses of milk. Then he said, "Mother, I saw her. She is sitting on her broom. She is up in a tree in front of the firehouse."

"Jim, please sit by me and tell me all about it."

Jim sat beside his mother. He started the story again: "She is in a tree in front of the firehouse. She is on her broom. I ran all the way

home. I think I'll make my jack-o'-lantern and put him in the window. If I go on the porch with my jack-o'-lantern, she may ride up and stop here."

"Jim," asked Mother, "who is she?"

"A Halloween witch. I saw her on my way home."

Mother laughed. When Father came home he laughed.

"I came past the firehouse but I did not see a witch," said Father.

The next morning when Jim went to school, the sun was shining. He looked up in the tree and saw a big black something. It was a big, old black branch hanging over the road.

"Oh," said Jim, "a branch cannot be a witch. I guess there was no Halloween witch after all."

ELABORATION OF A COMMONPLACE OCCURRENCE

Jim M. came to school the day after Halloween and told about the witch he "thought he saw" in the tree. Because he had not been an active participant in the class the teacher typed his story on the primer typewriter, then read it to the class. Jim was eager to practice reading it and then took it home to read to his father.

The original story, written about various members of the first grade, can greatly accelerate the reading interest and ability of children. Children will watch for their names and chuckle to "see themselves in print." A very commonplace occurrence may provide the teacher with material for a story she can mimeograph and send home for additional reading. The writer has produced stories including the following titles:

When Bill's Grandfather Sailed

Betsy, the Family Baker

Sally Visits the Supermarket

The content of these stories was always drawn from the vocabulary the children had already encountered in their basic texts. There was much repetition, and expressions used frequently in the first class were woven into the stories.

3

"Teacher, I Can Read!"

Joe had a face more like that of a man of sixty than a little boy of six. He was passive in class but nothing about him was submissive. He had a quiet watchfulness too old for his years.

Near the end of October he waited after school to speak to Mrs. Whitney. "I gotta learn to read better, ma'am, so I kin have the door key."

"The door key? What has that to do with reading?"

Joe took a deep breath. "My mom, she works all day and there's nobody home. She'll trust me to have the key if I can read the notes she leaves for me to tell me what to do."

"How do you manage now, Joey?"

"I jest sit on the porch or go see some of the kids. There's nothing much to do, and besides it's getting colder out."

So that was how Mrs. Whitney came to write notes to Joe. Every day she put two on the board and he read them to her:

Here is some money. Buy a quart of milk. Buy a loaf of bread, please.

Be sure to close the door.

Please put on your old shoes.

There are cookies on the table.

The boy struggled and worked and learned. He copied the notes his teacher put on the board and took them home to show his mother.

Finally the day came when he walked in the door, came and stood at Mrs. Whitney's desk. His blue eyes wrinkled with laughter as he tilted his chin upward and opened the top two buttons of his shirt. There hung the key—emblem of trust and reward for achievement! He looked so small and so proudly masculine that what he said seemed suddenly almost more than she could bear:

"See, teacher? I can READ!"

It is both a great privilege and a great responsibility to stand before your class that first day in September. You feel a little bit like a hand-maiden of God; these children cannot read and you can teach them. Their

very trust in you is a sobering thought; the flowers placed on your desk that morning are a symbol of their confidence and happiness in having you for the year ahead. And when that year ends, letters should have become words, you will have taught them how to read and write those words. A privilege? Yes. A responsibility? Very definitely. You smile, pat a curly head, call by name and hold a little hand. The year has begun.



THE FIRST READING EXPERIENCES

Since reading is a personal experience, its appeal is a personal one. All children are proud of their names, and around this idea it is possible to build an initial reading experience. A large mirror often helps the beginning reader. Since observation, writing, and reading go hand in hand all the way through school, each may start by drawing what he sees—himself! He may think and sketch and then go across the room, consult the mirror, and return to complete the self-portrait. When these are hung around the room or mounted on the chart they will bear the owner's name. A set of cards can be made so that names and portraits match. A class list on the board will look somewhat like this:

Jack	Mary	Patty	Rachel	Sally	Walter
Jane	Max	Paul	Ralph	Sam	Will
Jean	May	Peter	Robert	Susan	
John	Molly		Ronald		

This isn't really reading yet, but it does show that words have meaning. Every time a child looks at his drawing and the letters beneath it, he thinks, "That says 'Robert,' and that's me!"

In several days the children will learn to match these cards and portraits, and some will note Jane and Jack start alike but are not the same name. Many similar informal observations are needed before making the attempt to explain anything further. Often the teacher's picture is a part of the class art exhibit. Sometimes smaller pictures are made, labeled, and bound in a book called "Our Class Book."

Children are interested in their family and their pets. It is well to build on these interests.

This is Jack.

This is his house.

This is his mother.

This is his father.

This is the baby.

Each child may have a family book, illustrated by himself, labeled by the teacher, perhaps consisting of four or five pages, one for each member of the family and one for his house picture. These first "books" are great boosts to morale. Because there is so much repetition of vocabulary, children can read each other's material. Pet books and charts are always easily read and enjoyed because they represent things which are near and very dear to every six-year-old child.

THE READING CHART

There are several requisites for a good beginning reading chart, and the successful teacher will habitually observe all of them.

1. All charts should be done in manuscript writing with words clearly spaced.
2. Manuscript writing should be done with a black crayon or a pen fitted with a broad felt nib.
3. The writing on these charts should be sufficiently large so that children at the far end of the room will be able to see it.
4. Charts are most effective when printed on 24-by-36-inch chart paper lined so that capital letters will be 2 inches high and lower-case letters will be 1 inch high.
5. The wording of a chart should contain only a very simple message.
6. It is advisable to have chart paper already in position on bulletin board or easel so that when children make comments you wish to preserve they can dictate and you can record what they say without further preparation.
7. Each sentence should be one line long.

8. The habit of reading from left to right can be established by the teacher's always sweeping her pointer or her arm in a left-to-right direction. When more than one line is used to express a sentence, the teacher should call attention to what is happening:

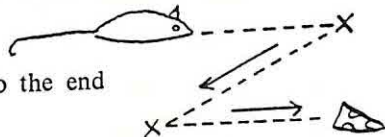
Jack and his father went
to see Grandmother.

"Notice how we travel back to the left when we read the next line." A piece of chart paper can be used with the story about

a mouse that went out to get cheese,

then ran down to the next line and out to the end

to find cheese.

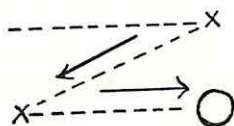


Several similar games may be played on the blackboard to encourage "left to right then back to left" reading.

A cat lost his ball and had

to travel back to the left

and out again to find it.



READING FAMILIAR WORDS

First "reading" experiences are based on the sight recognition of words that are orally familiar. For that reason children are capable of reading material that they dictate because the words recorded in manuscript are familiar thoughts and ideas expressed in written form. It is important to remember that the vocabulary they use will be the vocabulary they recognize.

The holidays may come and go, but birthdays occur all year long and are very significant to both the individual and the class. The alert reading teacher will realize this and seize the opportunity to enlarge the reading vocabulary.

A simple message which all can read may be written on the board or chart:

To Helen:
Happy Birthday!
We will say
For you are seven years old
Today.

Children like to make wishes, and these may be recorded on a chart for Helen:

Have a happy day, Helen.
We hope you have a cake.
We hope you have seven candles on it.
We hope you have gifts.

A large cardboard cake may be cut and colored, each child having drawn a large candle for it. When cards and cardboard cake are completed, the teacher may offer to write a story about Helen.

HELEN

Helen has brown hair.
Helen has blue eyes.
Helen likes to paint.
Helen is seven years old.
Happy birthday!

All birthday stories can be kept and reread later.

CHARTS AS SUPPLEMENTS TO PREPRIMERS

Charts initiate reading before the soft-covered preprimers appear, and continue with the primers to the end of the year. They continuously supplement the vocabulary with words appropriate to the season of the year. Science, stories, history, rules and regulations, birthdays and holidays—all appear around the walls, colorful and timely. Primers may come and go but the charts of the first grade go on forever.

It is very good practice to keep charts on file to be used for review whenever necessary. Such records of all types of subject matter are cumulative, increasing in difficulty as the vocabulary expands. Even the slowest reader will find satisfaction in reading and rereading these sheets and using the pictures as aids to word recognition.

IMPORTANCE OF REPETITION

The teacher who is new in beginning reading must watch reading experiences to be sure that sufficient repetition takes place to ensure that a given word becomes a part of the child's reading vocabulary. *About twenty to thirty repetitions are necessary for a superior child to learn to read a word.* Remember this if you are tempted to travel too fast with a child's beginning instruction. Not many pupils in a class will be superior. Do not fear repetition; children enjoy it. The success which they experience when reading familiar material warrants repetition. *Steady growth is to be preferred to acceleration which is often followed by remedial*

work. Anyone who has worked with the disappointed youngsters in a reading clinic knows that some would have learned to read in the first grade if they had been encouraged to make steady growth rather than hurried into the next book. Daily success in reading can be achieved if the child is interested in but not worried about the number of books he will be able to complete during the year.

For many weeks, in the beginning, phonics and sight recognition blend in reading. It is important to avoid random guessing at this point just because two words begin with the same letter, or have some of the same letters. "Mother" and "monkey" have three letters in common, but are otherwise dissimilar. The child must be encouraged to "look through the whole word" and not guess. In order to do this, he must establish the habit of recognizing a word silhouette. The word "airplane" is a good example. It is easy to remember because, as Donald said, "It looks like an airplane with crooked wings in the middle."

PHONICS

At the beginning of the first grade, while the class is still in the "chart stage"—memorization and initial word recognition—further phonics are subtly introduced.

There is always a certain amount of repetition on any chart. With the aid of the pictures that illustrate it and the teacher's voice, the child's eye and ear cooperate in memorization. But now, carrying one step further the kindergarten requirements of listening for similarities in words, the teacher begins to point out words that start with the same letter and with the *same sound of that letter* while she repeats these words: milk, mother, money, man, monkey. Then she inquires, "What do you hear that sounds the same in each word?" This is done many times with each of the consonants. At the same time that the pupils hear the words, the teacher writes them on the board and underlines the letter that she desires them to hear. The new teacher must be especially careful to avoid such contradictions as these:

George	soft g
Gail	hard g
cent	soft c
cat	hard c
brown	{ the blends <i>br</i> and <i>bl</i>
black	{ are not single consonant sounds.
box	<i>b</i> is a single consonant sound.



Listening to and recognizing the initial consonants come first. Next in importance is the terminal sound, which can be either syllable or consonant. MothER, sistER, fathER, brothER have an unmistakable

cadence which the ear early recognizes. It is not a difficult step later on from the ear to the eye.

Although a little time may elapse before a child receives his first preprimer, all of the basic vocabulary of that little book should have been learned through the charts which increasingly decorate the classroom walls. This seems unhurried and casual to the children, but it is part of a thoughtfully planned program designed to teach the words necessary to read that preprimer with success. The more carefully the teacher plans, the more quickly will the child read casually and without disappointment.

The first textbook, in particular, should be a successful reading experience. Few things are more pleasurable to a teacher than the sight of a pupil's face when he opens that preprimer, glances down the page, and turns his beaming smile upward to announce, "Why I can read this! I know every word in it." Yes, bless his freckled little face, he does know all the words. But this has been no stroke of luck. It could be better termed successful pedagogical strategy, planned well in advance.

VARIOUS USES OF WORD CARDS

The teacher will have a pile of word cards which can be used in various ways. If she is teaching colors, for instance, the pupil may match the card to the color, match the card to the word on a chart, or match the card to the spoken word. Numbers can be similarly taught. The chart will read something like this:

one
two
three
four
five

A second chart will go from six through ten. One set of cards will have just the word. Another set of cards will have pictures of one apple or two apples, and so on, but no words. The teacher may distribute both sets of cards throughout the class and when she calls, "Four!" the child having the word "four" will come up and the child having the picture of four apples will also come, so the entire group will see that these are equivalent.

If these word cards (especially the ones causing difficulty) are left in a conspicuous place, the children who arrive early may play school before class begins. A great deal of effective learning may take place at this time and you, as teacher, will have an opportunity to observe how your own teaching methods are imitated in the actions of your pupils.

Reading and creative language become daily joys to children when the teacher keeps extending the centers of interest with her class. Children are anxious to travel in their thinking and reading, but they need a teacher

who is an adventurer to go along and to chart their course. In the beginning stages of reading, *the teacher motivates and the pupils gladly follow.*

CHARTS AND ACTIVITIES BY MONTHS

September

FAMILY WORKERS

Mother goes to the store.
Mother cooks and cleans.
Father goes to work.
Father makes money.
Baby sleeps and sleeps.
Baby plays and plays.

In a chart such as this the teacher will read and reread it, and the children will do the same. She may ask questions of the class such as, "What line tells us that Baby sleeps?" or "What line tells us that Mother goes to the store?" For seat work, the pupils may illustrate what they read on the chart and the best illustrations are cut out and pasted to the large sheet in the front of the room. Homes may also be used:

TYPES OF HOMES

Jack lives in a tall house.
Jean lives in a little house.
Kitty lives in a big house.
George lives in a ranch house.

JOB ASSIGNMENTS

_____ will water the plants.
_____ will sharpen the pencils.
_____ will mix the paints.
_____ will pass the paper.

This chart has slots at the beginning of each line where different names may be inserted and changed weekly. Illustrations are placed after each line to facilitate reading.

RULES FOR A TRIP

Get a partner.
Sit down on the bus.
Talk quietly.
Listen when someone talks.
Say please and thank you.

This chart can be used before any trip as a basis of class discussion and part of the planning.



October

Charts should be integrated with daily occurrences; consequently, science as found in the children's world of nature will be an aid to reading, just as reading will later aid their knowledge of science in the upper grades.

This is a tree.
 This is a big tree.
 This is an oak tree.
 This oak tree is green.
 This oak tree came from an acorn.

The seasons give so many happy reading periods. Here the word "Happy" is used deliberately to stress the spontaneous enjoyment that arises from a mutual learning situation.

FALL

What Mother does:
 Mother cooks the meals.
 Mother makes jelly.
 Mother buys us warm coats.
 What Father does:
 Father puts on the storm windows.
 Father puts on his overcoat.
 Father puts anti-freeze in the car.
 What Bobby does:
 Bobby says "Good-bye, Mother."
 Bobby says "Good-bye, Father."
 Bobby goes to school.
 What animals do:
 The squirrel hides nuts.
 The robins fly south.
 The bear hibernates.

Some new teachers may question the use of "anti-freeze" and "hibernates." *Children will be found to have no difficulty in the use of words when they have been accustomed to hearing them correctly spoken in familiar situations.* Care should be exercised to letter each chart correctly by putting capital letters in the proper places, i.e., "I saw Mother" as compared with "I saw my mother," which does not have a capital letter because of the modifying pronoun. If the chart bears a direct quotation, see that the punctuation is complete. Such learning is incidental, but important in that it establishes a correct visual habit pattern, and that alone is integral to language arts material where the eye supplements the hand continuously.

Holidays offer natural reasons for charts such as one for October 12:

Columbus came in 1492.

Columbus had three ships.

Columbus was a sailor.

The three ships were

The *Pinta*, the *Nina*, the *Santa Maria*.

The *Pinta* was the painted one.

The *Nina* was the little one.

Later, when the teacher enlivens a rainy day by reading riddles with the class, she adds to the occasion by including:

He had three ships.

He came in 1492.

He was a sailor.

His name was _____.

The many wonderful science experiences in the autumn make reading a necessity in order to keep records of trips to the class tree when the leaves are still green and of subsequent trips when the leaves are multi-colored. A walk in the park for city children or a walk in the woods for rural children brings forth all types of experiences about which to write:

We walked in the leaves.

We saw many colors.

Red, orange, yellow, green, brown.

We opened our milkweed.

It flew up, up, up.

It carried seed.

We went to the park.

We saw a squirrel.

It had a nut.

It had a long tail.

All children enjoy Halloween, so it is used as a fresh idea around which to build new stories. Making plans for the Halloween party involves much oral discussion and reading.

HALLOWEEN PLANS

James will bring apples.

George will bring apples.

Nancy will bring cookies.

Ethel will bring candy.

John will bring napkins.

Stories and poems about Halloween are greatly enjoyed and imaginations work to capacity to tell a spooky story which may later become a

part of the class book, giving art and language a chance to merge.

Since this is a time when unusual words are used, it is again opportune to use a reading dictionary as a reading technique, with illustrations, of course.

A spook	A hat	A jack-o-lantern
A witch	An owl	A black cat

November

ELECTION DAY

Today is Election Day.

Mothers and Fathers will come to vote.

Mothers and Fathers will come to see us work and play.

THE BOOK FAIR

Today we go to the Book Fair.

We will see books about pets.

We will see books about toys.

We will see books about trains.

We will see books about planes.

Indians belong to children just as Santa Claus does. They are frequently a part of the daily discussion. Indian picture books are often brought to school, and many stories leading to the Thanksgiving unit center around them. An Indian dictionary is always an appealing way to combine art and reading. Souvenirs, such as canoes, moccasins, feathers, and beads, which come to school for the sharing period become the nucleus of our chart dictionary, which will be illustrated by the pupils:

A canoe is an Indian boat.

A moccasin is an Indian shoe.

A tepee is an Indian house.

A visit to a turkey farm can be a rewarding experience, first visually, then orally, and, finally, on a reading chart. Many city children only see a turkey stuffed on the Thanksgiving dinner table; others have acquired their ideas from pictures. After a trip to a farm, one six-year-old remarked, "Oh, a turkey has only two legs! I thought he had four, like a horse!"

Original stories, poems, and science sheets will follow. The simple rhymes, together with their author's name, will encourage even the less alert child to read, as, for example:

"Turkey, turkey, run away,
Tomorrow will be Thanksgiving Day."
Nancy

"Turkey, turkey,
Come to me.
I will roast you
One, two, three."

Jack

A large cardboard cupboard, with doors that can be opened, provides much reading and amusement. When the doors are open, the Thanksgiving foods appear on each shelf listed by name and illustrated:

turkey	apples	cranberries	potatoes
pie	pumpkins	nuts	onions

The *Mayflower* story and the trip of the Pilgrims traced on the globe may be recorded and read as well as dramatized. Dramatization is one way to clarify meanings in reading. When children attempt to reproduce a story or an episode, it will be seen whether their concepts are correct. Language meanings are strengthened by dramatic play.

Below is an appropriate chart for the Wednesday before Thanksgiving:

THANKSGIVING

I can say "Thank you."
Thank you, Mother.
Thank you, Father.
Thank you, God.

December

As soon as we tear the leaf from the calendar and December appears we are ready to put a ring around December 25 and begin to plan for it. The oral and reading vocabularies grow rapidly at this period. Plans are discussed and written down so that they may be reread and checked. Things to make for Mother and Father are listed thus:

THINGS WE CAN MAKE FOR MOTHER

a clothes sprinkler
a needle book
a pot holder
a paper weight
a table mat

THINGS WE CAN MAKE FOR FATHER

a door stop
a bill clip
an ash tray
a book mark

The Christmas dictionary is illustrated, large, and varied. Because these words are identified by sight recognition, art is necessary to clarify the meaning. The symbols of the season lend themselves to colorful illustration:

holly	poinsettia	gifts	toys
candle	snow	Santa Claus	stocking
fir tree	sled	bells	

Science charts are based on Christmas animals and have a different vocabulary:

THE CAMEL

Why does the camel have long eyelashes?
 What does it carry in its hump?
 Look at the animal's feet. Tell me what you see.

THE REINDEER

What food does a reindeer eat?
 Where are his antlers?
 Where does the reindeer live?

THE SHEEP

What do we call a baby sheep?
 What sound does a sheep make?
 What does a sheep give us that keeps us warm?
 What does a sheep eat?

A week before Christmas the teacher may want to make a large chart with three red paper stockings attached. The children will draw toys to cut out and put in each until it bulges with holiday gifts. It will read:

Can you make something for Jack's big red stocking?
 Can you make something for Mary's red stocking?
 Can you make something for Bobby's little stocking?

January

Winter affords a chance to record many science experiments and observations. "Thermometer," "magnifying glass," and "microscope" may all appear on first-grade reading charts without causing difficulty. The children will have observed the thermometer when freezing water, and they have caught snowflakes on black velvet and examined them under a magnifying glass. (The teacher, of course, must have these things ready for the fall of snow so they can be used without delay.) Bits of plant life from the aquarium are fascinating to watch under a microscope.

January is a month when all the glow of Christmas has worn thin and reading interest will lag unless new and interesting topics are introduced. Snow is always interesting to children.

Oh, oh, oh!
See the snow.
Please stay—
We want to play.
Please don't go,
Pretty snow.

Folded white paper can be cut into fascinating snowflake designs and either mounted on colored paper or used to ornament the January room charts.

Seat work in January may center around favorite Christmas toys; the art work should be accompanied by original stories such as these:

I have a train.
It goes round and round.

or

My new doll can cry.
She can drink.
She can sleep.

or

I like my new boat.
I put it in the bathtub.
It goes fast.

Street signs we can read in January:

No Parking
Thin Ice
No Skating Today
Railroad Crossing
Stop Street
Bus Stop

January is a good time to give a gingerbread party for mothers. This can be a group project with group planning and a sharing of jobs and time. The result is group enjoyment. The week before the children listen to the story of the Gingerbread Man and a poem that goes like this:

Humpty, dumpty, dickery dan.
Sing hay, sing ho! for the gingerbread man!
With his smile so sweet, and his form so neat,
And his gingerbread shoes on his gingerbread feet.

His eyes are two currants, so round and black;
 He's baked in a pan, lying flat on his back;
 He comes from the oven so glossy and brown,
 The loveliest gingerbread man in town!

And why is his gingerbread smile so sweet?
 And why is his gingerbread form so neat?
 And why has he shoes on his gingerbread feet?
 Because he is made for my Teddy to eat.¹

The gingerbread men will be baked in the domestic science room, and that day two mothers may come to help with the hot pans, but the entire class will want to watch and help.

On the day of the party each child serves his mother a gingerbread man and a container of milk and a paper napkin. They hear the story of the gingerbread man again and come in on the refrain with an effect almost like choral speaking. Their mothers look at the art work displayed around the room and listen to their sons and daughters proudly read the different charts as they move about on a tour of inspection. Then all too soon the half hour will be ended and the gingerbread party will be over.

Each month has its roster of famous names. Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17. His chart could read like this:

Ben Franklin lived long ago.
 He made a kite.
 He printed books.
 He was a great American.

February

February, the birthday of many famous men, becomes an ideal month for a Who's Who bulletin board like this:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

[his picture]

February 12

The accompanying chart will read:

He lived in a log cabin.
 He liked to read books.
 He was a lawyer.
 He was a president.

¹ Eva E. Rowland, "Gingerbread Man," *Outlook*, 63 (December 9, 1899), 893.

Thomas Edison has a birthday on February 11. The chart for him can be phrased like a riddle:

He was an inventor.
He gave us electric lights.
His name was _____.

George Washington was born on February 22:

He was a surveyor.
He was honest.
He was brave.
He was our first president.

Valentine's Day gives us the chance to combine reading and writing. The children help the teacher compile a list of valentine sayings somewhat as follows:

I love you.
Be my Valentine.
I want you for my Valentine.

From a list of these and other phrases, the children may choose the correct words to ornament the valentines they make in class.

February is the time to plant bulbs, and their growth should be recorded on charts in this way:

This is February 1.
We planted our bulbs.
We watered the bulbs.
We put them in the dark.

This is February 6.
We looked at our bulbs.
They are growing green leaves.

This is February 19.
We have flowers in our room.
They smell sweet.
They are narcissus.

Other reading charts for this month included plans for making simple bird feeders. The custodian had made a feeding shelf outside the classroom window where the pupils could observe the birds as they came to eat what the class had brought. The other feeders were prepared by the girls and boys.

The bird feeders that the class made were empty halves of grapefruit with wire loops to fasten them to trees and high bushes. A chart recorded their plans for bringing food:

Jane will bring cranberries.
 George will bring suet.
 Betty will bring bread.
 Ann will bring popcorn.
 May will bring apples.

Before February ended, the class took a trip to see the class tree. On their return they painted the black leafless tree as they saw it, for when spring comes they will return and paint the same tree with its delicate green foliage. Art work is always accompanied by an original sentence describing the picture.

Any class that has reading groups, seatwork, art, reading charts, classroom duties, science and library corners, and a bird feeding station outside the window has very few disinterested children in it. The teacher who is willing to devote time and energy to the maintenance and variation of these projects will find her reward in the enthusiasm of her class. Nothing is ever accomplished without that little bit of imaginative effort on her part.

March

March is a wonderful month for children. On the seventeenth they have St. Patrick's Day; hence the chart will have green art work:

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

We will wear something green.
 We will make an Irish potato man.
 We will dance an Irish jig.

Songs, dances, shamrocks, and names like Pat and Mike and Nora and Bridget are creative material for chart work or a class party. Stories have a special charm when they tell of "the wee men of Ireland with the tiny button faces."

Spring starts creeping into life about this time and it is recorded in words for children to read and write about:

We cut forsythia.
 We put it in water.
 We watched for yellow flowers.

and

SIGNS OF SPRING

Who will find the first blade of grass?
 Who will find the first pussywillow?
 Who will find the first dandelion?

The first flowers of spring find their way to the teacher's desk in small limp offerings of affection and serve as models for art and short, original stories.

In the northeastern part of our country the maple sap begins to run about this time. This miracle of returning life to nature is a fascinating experience to all children wherever they may live. Much of reading is learning through vicarious experience: the child who reads in sunny California is becoming as well informed as the one who has the same material before him in frosty Maine. A jug of maple syrup should then mean much to each. This is the perfect occasion for a chart of the interior of the maple tree, and one telling how the sap runs and how the syrup is made, finishing with crackers and maple syrup served with plenty of paper towels. The child listens, reads, writes, and finally tastes it—a real learning process.

The mad March wind that blows the clouds about is full of fascination for the class. In fact, *the class will be interested in almost everything the teacher is genuinely interested in herself.* Now is an excellent time to give the correct names to the winds (and put it on the chart, of course). The North wind does not blow toward the north, it comes *from* the north, full of cold. The same is true of all the three other winds. This is a natural lead to the teaching of directions and the reading of a compass. A moist finger held aloft, Indian style, to feel the chill of the wind against it will help to determine direction. The new vocabulary words will include "compass," "wind," all the forms of the verb "to blow," and "east," "west," "north," and "south." Intangibles such as the terms of direction are difficult to teach well unless they are found in a natural situation like this.

April

April 1 was a sunny day.
April 2 was a cloudy day.
April 3 was a rainy day.
April 4 was a sunny day.

At the close of the month the record would be totaled thus:

April had 13 sunny days.
April had 12 rainy days.
April had 5 cloudy days.

This April record can be used as a frieze around the room with little stick figures hurrying along under umbrellas of different colors, as an independent activity (seatwork), or as a combination of number work and vocabulary on a chart. Colored illustrations will help with the new words.

We have 28 umbrellas.
We have 10 red umbrellas.
We have 5 blue umbrellas.
We have 3 green umbrellas.
We have 6 plaid umbrellas.
We have 2 brown umbrellas.
We have 2 black umbrellas.

Here is a particularly attractive chart for this month which doubles for both reading and art and keeps little hands occupied while the teacher is busy.

Make your picture in your Easter clothes.

Cut it out so we can put you in the Easter parade.

The children read and then follow instructions. As soon as the figures are completed and cut out, the teacher will paste them to the board, sketch in some grass, and put the pupil's name above each figure. Then the board will look like this:



EASTER PARADE—GRADE 1

Easter brings the Easter rabbit in a flurry of new clothes, springtime, candy, and flowers. These multiple interests lend themselves well to a new form of reading—choral speaking. The teacher will have prepared clear duplicated copies of the poem for each child. At first the children follow the lines of the poem silently while the teacher reads it.

As one repetition aloud follows another their eyes grow accustomed to the new words and the children use previous learning clues to help them with quick recognition; then lo! they find themselves able to read a comparatively complex bit of poetry very well. At this point the teacher will be able to direct the timing of their voices into a pleasing whole, and choral speaking has been initiated. Motions help too—a finger to the lips for quiet, a shake of the head for sadness, and various motions of the hands in unison, all make choral speaking more dramatic and more pleasurable.

PETER RABBIT²

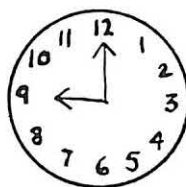
Small Peter Rabbit
Had a bad habit:
He couldn't let lettuce alone.
He told all his brothers
And they told still others
Of a garden where lettuce had grown.
So there they came creeping,
All peeping and creeping,
In night-time and day-time,
In rain and in dew;
There they came creeping
To nibble and chew,
To nibble and chew.
They were good little rabbits,
No better were known.
But even good rabbits
May have some bad habits:
They can never let lettuce alone.

A trip to the dairy farm, which often coincides with spring stories in the primers, yields many opportunities for extra reading material. Here are the actual chart stories made by two first-grade teachers in the same building. One of these groups had a higher reading ability than the other, as will be evident from the charts.

At last the day for our trip to the farm is here.
What a good day!

² W. L. Simpkins, "Peter Rabbit," in *Choral Speaking and Speech Improvement* (Darien, Conn.: Educational Publishing Corporation, 1945), p. 43.

The bus will come at this time



Who will see it first?

On Tuesday, April 7, we went to visit Sunnyview Dairy Farm. We went in a big red bus.

What fun we had.

They have all kinds of animals at this farm.

We saw big goats and little kids. Kids are baby goats. They were hopping here and there.

A big brown and white bull was outside the barn. He is the father.

Some boys were having a good ride on a pony.

We saw the funny animals that are called burros.

When we went into the big white barn we saw some Guernsey cows. Some were eating hay and some were drinking water. They all had tags on their ears. Some cows were out in the pasture. One was drinking water at the duck pond.

There were no ducks because the turtles had a good duck dinner.

A big farm dog went all around the farm with the children.

Next we went into a building where there were large tanks for pasteurizing the milk. That is heating the milk to kill the bacteria.

Some of the milk went through pipes into tank trucks.

Some of the milk was put into bottles. Then the bottles were put into boxes. Big machines did this work. Then the bottles went away on big trucks.

On the way out we saw a little house that was full of ice that looked like pretty white snow. This ice helps to keep the milk on the trucks cold.

Before we went back to the bus we had chocolate milk and cookies.

Mrs. Edgar gave each one of us a ruler and a little book about Sunnyview Farm.

We all liked our day at the farm.

One day we went to visit Sunnyview Dairy Farm.

We went on a big red bus. It was fun.

They have all kinds of animals at this farm.

A mother duck with her seven baby ducks went down to the pond to swim.

A mother goat and her three baby kids were hopping here and there.

A big farm dog went with us everywhere we went.

Next we went into a building where there were large tanks for pasteurizing the milk. That is heating the milk to kill the bacteria.

Some of the milk went through pipes into the tank trucks.

Some of the milk was put into bottles. Big machines did this work.

Machines put caps on the bottles. Then the bottles were put into boxes. They went riding away to milk trucks.

On the way out we saw a little house that was full of snow. This helps to keep the milk cold on the trucks.

Before we went back to the bus we had chocolate milk and cookies. How good they were.

Next we saw a baby calf that was one week old. It was eating green grass. A big brown bull was tied outside the barn.

When we went into the big white barn we saw lots of Guernsey cows. Some were sleeping, some were eating hay and others were drinking water. Some cows were out in the pasture.

All of the stories about the trip to the farm will be typed on a primer typewriter and "bound," so that the class will have another reading book entitled *Our Trip to the Farm*. Another story book might be entitled *Our Friend, the Cow* and include stories about products from the cow such as milk, cheese, leather, glue, gelatin, meat, and hair.

May

By May the class is ready for a newspaper. Committees will be chosen to gather news, write stories and poems, run a lost and found column, make science observations, and draw the funny sheet. The teacher advises only indirectly and does the final organization and duplicating. The funny sheet in particular is typical first-grade humor, and no adult will find it half as hilarious as the children do. It may contain the picture of a house without a door, for instance. "What's funny about that?" the teacher may ask. "Why you can't go in or out without a door. Don't be silly!" and the funny sheet committee will begin to giggle again. Equally humorous will be a picture of a boy with three feet or a horse with two tails. Never mind, it's all in fun.

The science page may have some comments on seeds and how they have grown, or perhaps the class tree or the spring flowers. It may tell how many rainy days occurred in April or how the guppies in the classroom are coming along. The news items will tell about Joe's new puppy, Mary's trip to New York, or the new baby brother for Ray.

When the teacher organizes the newspaper and the work is all in, she will note that the vocabulary closely resembles that of the primer. She will have the opportunity to clarify the use of verb tenses when she helps the children proofread their work. The different endings of words are especially important at this stage of reading and should be emphasized on every possible occasion.

Each child receives a copy of the newspaper to take home with him. He will be able to read it to his parents and proudly tell of his share in the

publication. A whole new world of reading and writing has begun to open up and there is a mingled sense of pride and achievement in everything he does independently.

The story charts for the class this month give subtle emphasis to tense changes in verbs.

We plant seeds today.

We planted a garden yesterday.

June

June 14 is Flag Day. The reading charts carry rules for care of the American flag. The children hear the story of Betsy Ross and they compose little poems about the flag and illustrate them.

Father's Day comes on the third Sunday in June. Each child may make a little book about his father to take home as a gift. It will have a picture of his father and a story that goes something like this:

My daddy is a big man.

He makes money.

He goes to the office every day.

He takes me to the zoo.

He helps me with my work.

I love my father.

June is also a vacation month, and with the close of school come plans for going on picnics, swimming, visiting the grandparents, and taking trips here and there. Stories about the summer vacation to come make natural topics for reading, writing, art, and discussion.

The teacher may use June for self-evaluation and in doing so make use of vocabulary review. The class may decide on two lists for the charts:

Things we liked in Grade I:

and

Things we did not like in Grade I:

This listing can be made through class discussion following a reading of individual stories on either topic. Children like to be able to voice their opinions both pro and con, and the teacher who listens with an open mind can learn a great deal about herself, and profit by it for the next year.

Bees make their appearance in some sections and the teacher in suburban schools should not miss the opportunity to use bees and their community life for another source of reading:

Drones
Queen
Bee hive
Honey comb
Clover

Perhaps a party seems in order before the close of school. June is honey time: bees, flowers, honey, and crackers naturally go together. Bees and flowers are science. Buckwheat and clover honey are combined science and sheer enjoyment, but don't forget the paper napkins and crackers.

June is a summary month (the pun is unintentional), a time to review all previous vocabulary and evaluate progress since last September.

In September a start was made with name cards; in June the teacher writes a message on the board and her pupils read it easily. What is more, they can write the teacher a note in return. The children read their old charts of September and October with the ease of linguists. They are amazed that they could ever have been so "simple minded"; now they read much more and much more easily and have much, much more of a vocabulary. It makes them very proud to be able to say to their parents "Sure I can read. Want to hear me?" Their progress is a measure of the success of the teacher as well as of the system in which she teaches.

4

The Hook and the Stick

It was a Friday just before Mother's Day and the twenty-eight pupils of Miss Evans's class were busily designing cards to take home. They carefully lettered the words "I love you, Mother" or "Love and kisses to Mommie" and colored flowers all around the border.

Eileen raised her hand and asked, "Will your little girl make you a card for Mother's Day?"

Miss Evans smiled at the youngster. "I'm not lucky enough to have a little girl, dear. You see, I've never been a mother."

"That's too bad," said Eileen thoughtfully, and went back to work.

And when it came time to go home somebody left a card on Miss Evans's desk. It had pink and blue roses on it and the careful manuscript writing read, "If you were a mommie, you would make a nice one. Love, Eileen."

And Miss Evans put that card in her purse and carried it to church on Sunday as proudly as if she were a mother too.

WRITING ONE'S NAME

Early in the first year, hand in hand with reading, comes manuscript writing. As soon as a child begins to read, he should be able to reproduce what he sees in the book. So, before the preprimers are passed out, while the charts in the classroom are establishing a basic sight vocabulary, each pupil should become acquainted with his own name. He receives a card carefully lettered "John Smith" and keeps it in his desk. This card is always done with just two capital letters and all the rest in lower-case. *It is always John Smith and never JOHN SMITH.* All through the school year, that individual card will be the guide to the correct writing of his name with which to identify charts, art work, and notes to his mother. Later in the year, he will throw away the name card. Success! He has learned to write and spell his own name without any more help.

In the beginning, John's teacher explains that it will be a help to her if each pupil can learn to write his own name, just the first name to start, and later the entirety. Two basic symbols are all that are necessary to

teach manuscript writing: the hook and the stick, *but the entire process must be taught as logically and dramatically as number work*. If it is properly taught, the results are neat and legible and the transition into cursive is greatly simplified. Children know that green means GO and



that red means STOP. Put a green strip of masking tape on the upper left-hand corner of each desk and a red one on the upper right-hand corner. Slow learners especially benefit by this, for left-to-right directions are thus easier to follow.

John starts with board work, where he can use his large muscles and the teacher can carefully check his work. His writing goes from left to right, the way he learns to read, and any tendency to do otherwise can be corrected before a habit pattern is established. Here, too, the reversals that cause so much difficulty in the middle and upper grades can be prevented under careful supervision. Good examples of this are *b* and *d*. The *i* and *l* will need special attention and drill, as well as *m* and *n* and *k* and *h*. All of this points toward spelling, and carelessness now will become the source of more complicated troubles later.

The teacher writes "John" on the board explaining each letter according to a teaching pattern. The capital *J* is a "stick with a hook and a stick on top; *o* is a hook and keep on going; *h* is a long stick with a hook; *n* is a little stick and a hook; and there it is—John!"

Three lines drawn on the board with a yardstick provide for capitals and tall letters in practice, and the children need a lot of practice. It is futile to say with mounting irritation, "But I explained all that yesterday, don't you remember?" No, they don't remember at first; remembering takes a lot of practice, a lot of examples of capitals and small letters in the room, and a lot of supervision. Manuscript writing can be developed with poor habit patterns or with good, depending on the patient persistence of the teacher who supervises it. The constant repetition can become a game enjoyed by all.

"Who can write an s for me? That's good, Barbara. A hook and another hook!"

"And who can write a g? Remember how to do it? A hook and a hook below the line. That's right, Bobbie."

All children like to be able to write. At first they will say, "This is not the way my mother writes."

WHY MANUSCRIPT?

You will assure them, "No, this is the way our primer is written, and now you are able to copy from your primer anything you may wish to copy." Why do we teach this type of manuscript? Because at the end of two or three weeks the average child in the room is able to produce enough writing to enjoy copying his name, messages like "Milk will be 25¢, Mother," or any other brief notices to be sent home. He may also learn to send notes to a child who is sick or an invitation to come and visit, or write a few words of "thank you" for the class. Written communication is a fascinating thing and should not be withheld until the child acquires the maturity and the ability to write as Grandmother writes. Writing begins when reading begins and spelling becomes a part of the picture. The wise teacher learns not to send an oral message but one which can be pupil-written and -delivered. There is a definite satisfaction in seeing someone read what he has written, the satisfaction of accomplishment.

When children are at home sick for several days it is always a good idea to send a card. This provides an opportunity to write a message using words that the child can read, and to present new ones that are currently being introduced in class.

CHARTS

It is always advisable, when children have learned to write manuscript, to keep sample charts for easy reference. This will prove to be a saving of time for the teacher and a source of independence on the part of the children. Have the small letters in the manuscript alphabet always in evidence in a handy place in your room. Later, when there is need for capital letters, they should be added and placed in a prominent spot so that work can be done without running to the teacher to ask, "How does *k* look? And now I want to make a capital *k*." *The two will appear simultaneously on your wall chart.*

The starred letters below should be given special attention:

- a is a hook and a stick
- *b is a stick and a hook
- c is a hook

- *d is a hook and a stick
- e is a stick with a hook around it
- f is a hook and a stick
- g is a hook and a hook
- h is a stick and a hook
- *i is a stick and a dot
- j is a hook and a dot
- k is three sticks
- *l is a tall stick
- *m is a stick and two hooks
- *n is a stick and one hook
- o is a hook and keep on going
- p is a stick and a hook
- q is a hook and two sticks
- r is a stick and a hook
- s is two hooks
- t is a stick and a little stick
- u is a hook and a stick
- v is two sticks
- w is four sticks
- x is two sticks crossed
- y is a short stick and a long stick
- z is three sticks (In order to avoid reversals one might say, "Z is made of three sticks—a boy went out to play and forgot his baseball—he went in again and came out with his baseball.")

This list is not the wall chart; it is the teacher's own summary of the unvarying oral repetition which accompanies the formation of each letter from the very beginning. Following a similar pattern, the capital manuscript letters can easily be learned.

When teaching manuscript writing be sure to have the child place his paper straight before him, not slanted as for the cursive writing lesson.

SPACING

As soon as the transition from single to multiple words is made, one of the problems of manuscript writing is the problem of spacing. The child's first writing will have the letters widely separated and one word will blend into another without regard for meaning such as "I c a n j u m p" rather than "I can jump." The sentence "See me hop" can be unintelligible when written "S e e m e h o p." A simple way to remedy this is to say, "Put the letters close together and leave three fingers' space between the words," and see that it is done that way each and every time.

This may sound quite formal for a first grade, but it helps the child with his reading and later clarifies his spelling words. If the child leaves spaces between letters he may also attempt to repair his spelling by belatedly inserting a letter. For instance, the pupil may write *c o l r*, and later merely insert the missing *o* to make it read *color*, but his ability to spell the word later has not been ensured through the performance.

HANDEDNESS

In the first few weeks of school, just before writing begins, it becomes necessary for the teacher to determine which of her pupils are left-handed and which are right-handed. This is not always readily apparent, but it must be determined when manuscript writing is initiated.

Her choice is made slightly difficult, for, although a youngster may appear to favor one hand over the other, he may really be ambidextrous. In such a case he should be encouraged to use his right hand. But if he is a natural "leftie," he should develop that hand for writing and not be changed.

An ambidextrous child will use either hand with equal ease; a left-handed child may use his right hand upon occasion or when he makes a deliberate choice, but will always resort to his left hand in free spontaneous action. The wise teacher will put Peter in a circle to play "catch" with the others, with the idea of determining his handedness. She may smilingly toss the ball to him without warning several times. If he extends his left hand in a natural response, she feels assured that he should write with that left hand. Susan, however, will catch the ball with either hand. She is ambidextrous and should be encouraged to write in the conventional way. This simple discriminating procedure saves many a headache later when problems of fine muscular coordination and aptitudes accompany natural growth of mind and body.

NEED FOR SUPERVISION

Manuscript writing should not be practiced without supervision and guidance. It is now, at the beginning of learning, that habits are formed. There is no substitute for good habits, pleasure, and a sense of early achievement in the language arts. The price we pay for carelessness, frustration, and failure is found years later in a dislike for reading, hidden fear, antagonism toward school, painfully poor spelling, and, all too frequently, retardation in grade level.

5

The Growth of Ability to Read

Six-year-old Cynthia could hardly wait for dessert she was so anxious to read to her aunt. She held her copy of Peter Rabbit in one hand as she finished her favorite pudding. The great moment came and Cynthia read the story with fine expression and apparent enjoyment.

"Isn't it wonderful these days how children learn to read in a few weeks. Cindy has been in school only six weeks and can read an entire book," Auntie remarked to Grandpa.

"Yes," said Cynthia, "and I can read it this way, too." Whereupon she turned the book upside down so that Peter Rabbit was standing on his head but Cindy continued to read.

Be sure, new teacher, that your child is reading—not quoting from memory.



PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST PREPRIMER

First of all, reading is taught through sight recognition of words in stories based on familiar experiences. After a sight vocabulary of 80 to 120 words has been attained, the teacher will prepare for the next step.

She will check to make sure that her pupils know all of the words in the first preprimer, for the minute that book is opened the child should be able to smile and say, "Why, this is easy, teacher! I can read all the words." *That book must be a success from the very beginning.* She will have already chosen her reading groups according to their needs, and planned a circle of chairs in a well-lighted corner next to the blackboard. Whenever the occasion arises, she will use that board to show the differences between words as well as their similarities. For instance, to show something similar about words, she may put

See
Spot
Sally
something

and to show differences in words,

horse	children
house	chicken

Before the first preprimer day, the children should have become familiar with the characters of their reading series. No matter what the series is, each one has a set group of characters who continue on through the primary grades. In the first grade especially, before a new character is introduced, the class should be familiar with his name and personality. If youngsters are surprised in a reading situation their readjustment to a new name will slow the entire group unnecessarily.

Before the first preprimer is introduced, large figures of Father, Mother, Ann, and Baby may be made by the teacher and jointed with brads. These are labeled and colored and may be used as models for independent art work. The family pets, the kitten and the dog, may be made in the same way. When these appear in the first preprimer they will seem delightfully familiar—almost like old friends.

These preprimers are never left in the hands of the students. After reading groups meet, twice a day, the books are returned to the book closet. A child who is permitted to read his book at random will form bad habits difficult to eradicate. He will "read" from the back to the front, from right to left, guess wildly at words he doesn't know. In short, there will be no success, no anticipation, and no fun!

Preprimers come after the first few weeks and should not be postponed too long, for both parents and children are anxious for tangible

evidence of reading. There are three or four preprimers in every series with cumulative vocabularies. As soon as a reading group has finished a book, then and then only, each child of that group may take home his preprimer and read it to the family. *At that point any reading help the family may offer will do no harm.*

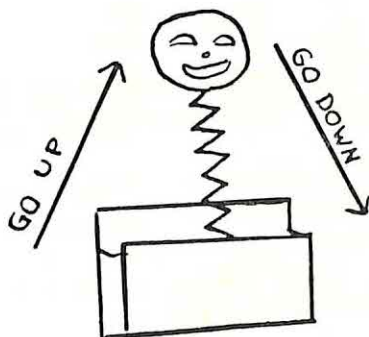
PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND PREPRIMER

Once the class is in the first preprimer—and some classes will be in it much longer than others—the wise teacher is preparing her pupils to recognize the vocabulary of the second preprimer through chart work. Perhaps two of the new words will be “play” and “sleep.” The charts will have sentences like these:

Come and play, Jean.
Come and play, Dan.
We will play house.

I sleep in a big bed.
The baby sleeps in a little bed.
We sleep at night.

Paradoxical though it seems, a child is likely to recognize words like “hibernate” and “butterfly” and have trouble with words like “up” and “down.” These are the abstract terms that are difficult to interpret in terms of the child’s vocabulary. In anticipation of a difficulty such as this, the teacher can devise a simple game for the bulletin board that will serve for both learning and play. A cheerful orange jack-o’-lantern attached to a folded paper extension hides behind a box. The left side has an arrow and the words “Go up” and the right side says “Go down.”



PHONICS

Preprimer work initiates phonics, and the first step is the sound of the beginning consonant. As always, much of this teaching is visual as well as aural and is based on the original sight vocabulary gained in previous weeks.

A large sheet of chart paper is folded into sixteen squares, each presenting a picture word beginning with the same letter, together with a recognizable illustration. If the teacher cannot draw, she can use colored pictures from magazines with very good results. The large sheets can be reproduced on smaller sheets of paper for seatwork.

D d is

for:	Don	doll	duck
dinner	dime	dollar	donkey
domino	door	dog	dish
daddy	daisy	deer	dot

The beginning teacher should be careful to avoid words with an initial consonant blend as distinguished from the pure beginning consonant sound, like "dress" instead of "dipper." In giving a consonant sound to a pupil she must be especially careful not to carry over a portion of another sound. Moreover, *b* should be *b* and not *ba*. She should think of the word "bank," for example, and make very certain that the "ank" is completely absent. What remains should be a pure *b* sound.

Phonics in the first grade is distinctly limited; its development is really a part of second-grade work. The first grade teaches all initial consonant sounds and many consonant blends. How many depends on the maturity of the class and the reading material being used. Differences in endings are taught incidentally but not stressed as drill: like, likes, liking, liked.

Differences in rhyming words are taught incidentally by charts that read something like this:

Run, run, run
This is no fun.

It should be unnecessary to remind the teacher that rhyming words should be spelled alike. Such combinations as "bear" and "pair" should be avoided.

The child should be encouraged to look at a word from beginning to end and not to neglect the middle; even though he is not specifically taught syllables, the teacher will remind him that center variations mean differences in words. Charts will continually demonstrate the fact that every word that begins with "e" is not "eat."

THE ALPHABET

The alphabet is taught *sequentially* as a matter of course when manuscript writing is initiated. Just as numbers are taught in the proper order, so should the letters of the alphabet. All dictionary and encyclopedic references in later years depend on this one skill.

THE CHILD'S DICTIONARY

In the first grade a child's dictionary is found in the wall charts which he can consult whenever he is doing creative writing. Here are examples which should be indispensable to any schoolroom:

Names of the days of the week:

Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Sunday
Tuesday	Thursday	Saturday	

Kinds of weather:

sunny	clear	windy	warm
cloudy	rainy	cool	foggy

Words that are the names of colors:

red	yellow	orange	brown	pink
blue	green	purple	white	black

These listings, particularly the last, have been compiled gradually as the words arose from the primers. Once the listing seems fairly complete it should be rewritten and arranged in alphabetical form, as in a real dictionary, and left as a permanent source of reference for the pupils.

Here are three more charts in their initial stages:

Words that tell what we can do:

jump	talk	work	fly
run	stop	read	make
go	laugh	sleep	push
ride	bump	feed	play
eat	look	call	think
do	walk	wish	thank
paint	buy	hop	color

Words that tell about things:

funny	bad	happy	pretty
little	good	big	

Words that tell how many:

one	five	all	two
six	some	three	seven
many	four	eight	

Another type of chart gives directions for seatwork:

What can a kitten say?
What do ducks say?
What do hens say?

What do Jack and Mary say?
What can Susan say?
What can you say?

This is what they say.
Now you find the right ones.

Thank you. Cluck, cluck.
Mew, mew. Good-by.
Quack, quack. Hello.

Make your stories look like this:

A kitten can say "Mew, mew."
Ducks say "_____, _____."

READING THE FIRST PRIMER

After three or four preprimers have been satisfactorily completed in the reading groups, the time approaches for the primer—the first real book. Many a child has been anxiously asking before this, "When do I get the hard covers, teacher? My mom wants to know."

When the first-grader holds that "hard-covered book" in his hands and begins to read from it, he has arrived at an emotional and mental milestone on the road to learning. Only a six-year-old can fully appreciate such satisfaction. Some of this comes from the home, of course. The teacher frequently hears comments like these, "Wait till Pop sees me with this. Now I have a *real* book"; or "My brother was seven before he got a hard-covered book."

When is a child ready for the primer? When he has been able to read the preprimers with ease. Some demonstrate this ability the first month in school. Others need more than the basic three or four. The teacher must decide when a child is ready for more intricate material and the challenge of a real story involving a sequence of events.

The primer allows more freedom in instruction as well as more freedom in individual reading. The pupils now can work independently upon occasion, reading silently at their desks. The teacher may pass out the primers to her group and write on the board, "Draw three pictures to show what happens in the story." Or

What did Mother buy at the store?
What did Baby like to eat?
What did Father like to eat?

Avoid too much variety in your questions as well as abstract or involved concepts, no matter how responsive your pupils may seem, for confusion will undo much of your good teaching. Work for brevity and comprehension. Dramatization often helps clarify the story and, as the reading progresses, so will the writing. The child should continue to grow

in skills, using sight recognition clues, picture clues, and contextual clues. Much choral speaking and poetry should accompany the primer stage.

Care should be taken that the child's learning rate is equal to the rate of presentation of new words. He should be able to comprehend and recall the material read silently from the primer. At this time he should be required to use simple skills of word attack taught during preprimer stages. This is one of the reasons that reading groups are always placed near the blackboard where the teacher can conveniently aid by demonstrating these skills when they are needed.

EVALUATING INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS

At this stage, it is wise for the first-grade teacher to evaluate individual success. The simplest procedure involves a check list and a card file which she can keep up-to-date in a few minutes after the close of school each day. This is a quick and invaluable reference when the principal or parents or even a substitute needs factual information about the progress of a child. On file cards, the teacher can quickly jot such memos as these:

Jack needs practice on initial consonants.
Put Nancy in fast reading group.
Give Joe "Cowboy Sam" for extra reading.
Play games involving colors.
Work on endings of words.

How many primers does a child have in the first grade? Again, that all depends on the abilities of the children. Some first grades will use more than one primer and others will be satisfied with one. The library corner will always have a variety of attractive books on the primer level for the individual reader who exceeds the group ability.

The first-reader level (Book I¹) follows the use of one or more primers, and the final decision for promotion to second grade will depend upon the child's accomplishment at this level. By the time June has come the child should have all the skills already initiated, plus speed and accuracy in interpreting sentence and paragraph concepts. Comprehension should never be sacrificed to speed, nor should speed be sacrificed for laziness.

The child should be able to see likenesses and differences in words, with particular reference to initial and final sounds. He should be able to make a quick mental recognition of words when substituting initial sounds, i.e., "mouse" and "house."

Advancement from this level needs serious consideration. The teacher must keep in mind the fact that social promotion from the first grade may well mean psychological demotion in the second grade. Reading

is the foundation on which future academic progress is built and for which there is no substitute.

From preprimer to primer, from primer to reader, with silent reading supplementing oral skills, and writing as an expression for creative thought, the months of the first grade should blend into the second grade naturally, happily, and successfully.

SEATWORK

Independent activities, commonly called "seatwork," are indispensable to the first-grade teacher. Three reading groups—thirty children—and only one adult present an obvious problem. When the teacher is busy with a small reading group at the front of the room for twenty or thirty minutes—and that group is followed by another and still another after that—what happens to the children at their seats during the time they are not part of a reading group?

It is essential that the teacher do her work uninterrupted by the other pupils; upon finishing the assigned seatwork, a child may visit the science, art, library, or play corner of the room. *But he must be quiet in what he does.* This alone takes patient, persistent training but is well worth all the effort it entails.

Material appropriate for seatwork

The nature of the independent activities assigned will have a great deal to do with the cooperation of the pupils. The material must always be based on review work, never new material. New material would encourage the children to ask questions, which is exactly what must not happen at that time. This independent work may be art, original writing, or learning reinforcement in any one of various reading skills. Inasmuch as reading groups come twice a day and a child spends twice as much time working independently at his desk as he does reading for the teacher, it is not surprising that seatwork should be carefully planned.

Unfamiliar skills should not be part of this seatwork. True-false questions are valuable, but only after such exercises are customary can they be used as effective independent work. Seatwork is always overassigned; some children finish more quickly than others, and sufficient work should always be provided for the fast members of the class. These are the children who will suffer the most from having the least to do.

The independent work assignment on the board may be divided into two groups: *Must Do* and *May Do*. This allows sufficient latitude for the more advanced child and gives a standard for the minimum requirements.

Experience plus an understanding of the level of class ability is the only criterion by which a teacher chooses and assigns the seatwork for the day. She must select the materials, such as paint, paper, and scissors, before the class begins, so that the class schedule may progress smoothly.

Suggestions for seatwork

Here are examples of seatwork that may be adapted to suit most average class needs as the year progresses:

1. Name and illustrate three signs of spring.

Examples: The first robin
Birds traveling back from the south

2. Name and illustrate four good things to eat for Thanksgiving dinner.

Examples: turkey, carrots, potatoes

3. Name and illustrate three things you would like for Christmas.

Examples: train, sled, doll

4. Construct simple paper collages. Material should be easily available so as not to disturb the reading groups, and examples should be displayed in order to aid in creative thinking.

5. Have the children write an original book.

- a. Take two blank sheets of paper and fold in half. These are the book pages.
- b. Using a reader for spelling, the children pick out the words they want to use and write their own stories.
- c. Crayoned pictures provide the illustrations.

6. Have the class copy a simple poem of four to six lines from the board for manuscript practice. Illustrate the poem with a crayon picture.

7. Information that the teacher wants sent home to parents can be put on the board in letter form and copied for manuscript practice. It can then be taken home.

8. For a good drill in name writing, cut long strips of paper about 2 inches wide. The child writes his name over and over on several yards of the paper and then takes it home to use as a decorative border in his bedroom.

9. Make name cards for hangers. Fold four-inch squares of tag-board in half. Make guide lines on each half, and have the children write their names in heavy pencil or crayon. Put each card on a hanger and paste in place.

10. Have each child pretend he is an animal and write a story about his life.

11. Draw pictures to establish a newly developed word.

Example: Tom

Draw his left hand—label drawing.



12. Make word blocks around new words:



13. Make felt lapel pins. Materials needed for simple, small, one-piece animal silhouettes: scraps of felt, scissors, cardboard patterns, safety pins, airplane glue. Each child can make up a short story about his animal.

14. Make clothespin people. Materials needed: clothespins, ribbon, poster paint, absorbent cotton, pipe cleaners, scraps of cotton cloth. These are useful figures for representing various members of the family and community helpers. Labels may be made for each.

15. Make scrapbooks. Children enjoy cutting out pictures from magazines. They can be encouraged to select pictures on one or two subjects—horses, dogs, trains, children. As each picture is pasted on the page, a descriptive sentence or two should be written beneath it.

16. Divide a story into ten or twelve parts, pasting them on cards, several short paragraphs to each card. Let several children sit together at the library table, read the cards, and put them together in the proper order for story continuity.

17. Make potato puppets. Make finger space at the bottom with a potato corer and the potato is ready to be made into a puppet with the aid of crepe paper, ribbon, crayons, and perhaps beads for eyes. Kept on the window sill, they last about a week.

18. Make paper-bag puppets. Using white bags, draw a face on the upper half and sketch in hair on the top and back. Slits in the sides of the bag on the lower half serve as openings for two fingers (arms). Stuff the bag loosely with tissue and gather it at the bottom with an elastic, and the puppet is ready.

19. Make book jackets for the books on the library table. Title and decorations can be done with crayon. Clear plastic covers are desirable but not necessary.

20. Draw a picture to illustrate a story. Show it to the class and tell just what part of the story it describes.

21. Put a riddle on the board, based on a familiar story. The children read the riddle and draw a picture of the answer.

It is black and white.
It is very little.
It has soft fur.
Susan likes to play with it.

22. Make a checkerboard of a familiar story. Have each child fold a sheet of paper lengthwise and then crosswise into four sections, and number them in sequence. In each section, in proper order, he will draw a picture about the story and write a sentence or two in explanation. The four pictures should contain the four basic ideas of the story from beginning to end.

23. Encourage children to bring in road maps and show them that a map is nothing but a picture. Demonstrate on the board that a map is a picture that shows the traveler how to get to a particular place. The children can then make a simple illustrated map of the trip from school to home, showing houses, trees, stores, cows, or any other familiar sights en route.

24. Make a paper weight or a doorstep out of a stone which is painted and decorated and finally shellacked. Felt can be pasted on the bottom. These make useful and inexpensive Christmas gifts.

25. Make a bracelet from shell macaroni enameled with various colors. Make holes by heating a nail and inserting it into the shells; string with elastic thread.

26. Make a pomander. Stick cloves into an orange or an apple until it is completely covered. Wrap in newspaper and keep in warm dry place for two weeks or until it is completely dehydrated. Wind with ribbon and leave loop for hanging.

27. Make a totem pole. Use cardboard boxes of various sizes and paste them on top of each other. Wings are made with oaktag and slipped through slits in boxes. Designs are painted with tempera.

28. Make a diorama. Use a shoebox to illustrate a scene from a story in the reader. It will be sufficient to have, for instance, a mother and child, a fringed paper rug, some wallpaper pasted in back, and a spool table. The label on the outside will explain the scene depicted.

29. Do a jigsaw puzzle. An assortment of simple jigsaw puzzles is not only useful in developing small-muscle skills, but in quieting a restless child who has finished assigned work.

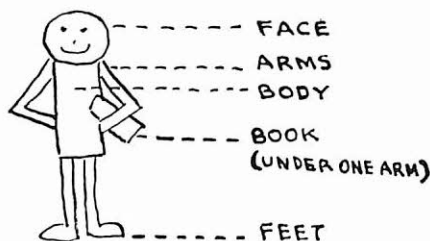
30. Make a page in the class album. Paste a small photograph of the child on a sheet of paper and the child will copy the following and fill in the blanks.

I have — eyes.
I have — hair.
I am — years old.

The teacher will make a book of these. Each child may take it home for a night to show his family the class album and read what it says about each classmate.

31. Strengthen reading through building words. The teacher will put on the board a list of words previously learned. She will have prepared envelopes (two for each child doing the work) with initial consonants in one and the remainder of the word in the other. The envelopes may contain pieces of ten words or less. For example, the first envelope will contain, among others, the letter "c." The other envelope will contain, among others, the "at" which will complete the word. The child may check this by the list on the board.

32. Make and label a pumpkin man. The teacher will draw a large pumpkin man on the board like this:



The children will draw and cut their own from colored paper.

33. Identify animals. The teacher writes ten or twelve animal names on the board: bear, horse, hen, elephant, dog, lion, cat, giraffe, zebra, kitten.

The children label one side of a paper (folded lengthwise) **ON THE FARM** and label the other side **IN THE ZOO**; they will put the animals listed on the board in their correct locations.

34. Draw something round that

1. you can eat.
2. makes music.
3. is on an automobile.
4. you can play with.
5. tells time.
6. a bird builds.

35. Make a "thankful" book. Take a large sheet of drawing paper folded in half. Write on the cover: **THINGS I AM THANKFUL FOR**. On the sheets beneath the child will write things for which he is grateful and illustrate them. Parents usually like this project very much as one or more of the child's thoughts are usually directed toward his happy home life.

6

Day by Day in the Classroom: Lesson Plans

Mrs. Young glanced through her reading text. The next unit was about Henry Ford. She had planned the reading lesson but was disappointed with the poor results. She had brought pictures of Henry Ford and of cars from the oldest model to the most recent. She had brought in a miniature of a surrey with fringe on top to illustrate a mode of travel that had preceded the automobile as a means of transportation. She had posted road maps on her bulletin board to integrate geography with reading. When she discussed her disappointment later with her principal, she received this reply; "Mrs. Young, you had visual aids, art ideas, geography, and good language discussion, but you forgot that all plans need to include help on the unfamiliar expressions your pupils will encounter in the text."

Do you agree with the principal's summary?

Teaching reading requires careful lesson planning. Each phase of your plan must contribute to the next step. There are five factors to consider when compiling materials for a reading lesson: the purposes of your lesson, the review of previous materials taught, the presentation of new ideas, the development of a summary, and the assignment of further activities connected with your lesson.

If you are a new teacher you may feel this is a lot to require before the actual teaching takes place. On the contrary, when you have thought through the purpose, related to the new story the reading story that has been taught, presented the new materials, summarized what has happened in the new story, and assigned, probably, some art work to follow the reading, you will feel genuine satisfaction.

Sometime, while traveling, you may have left baggage to be delivered and then waited for it to arrive. You remember whimsically the sign which said "delivered in all directions." A reading lesson taught without plans may have the same outcome. The remainder of this chapter contains

suggestions on utilizing and organizing appropriate materials in lesson plans.

LESSON PLAN 1: AMERICAN INDIAN THEME

As soon as we examine the illustrations in children's books depicting Thanksgiving, we see Indians. Children in the primary grades are always anxious to know more about Indians. Here, then, is an interest around which to center an October lesson plan.

Indian pictures may be hung on bulletin boards. Mounted beneath them are stories dictated by the children and typed by the teacher. Indian materials may be secured from the local museum, the state museum, and the children's homes, and exhibited so that children will have the opportunity to handle the various objects in the room.

A chart resembling a dictionary may be made for reading purposes. One might read:

A canoe is an Indian boat.

A moccasin is an Indian shoe.

A papoose is an Indian baby.

Using children's interest in pets to develop animal names, teach names of Indian children's pets:

deer squirrel

rabbit bear

turkey

Develop action words through dramatization:

laugh look sleep walk

run play hop sit

come fly look

sing go cry

drink eat talk

Review

1. Color charts.
2. Family charts.

Language

1. Indian children's poem.
2. Indian stories.
3. Stress correct forms in oral discussions:
were was
is are

Manuscript writing

1. Names (personal).
2. Date.
3. Copy short sentences on pictures, as:
This is a tepee.
This is a canoe.
4. Develop correct letter formation by pointing out similar and different shapes in writing.

Numbers

1. Recognize a digit three ways:
by grouping: "three canoes"
by the word: "three"
by the numeral: "3"
2. What comes after?
four ——— seven ——— nine ———
3. Have class write on board in answer to questions such as:
How does 6 look? How does 2 look?
4. Find pages in preprimer.
5. Develop use of "How much (money)?" and "How many Indian beads?"

Art

1. Make Indian scenes.
2. Make Indian headdresses.
3. Model in clay.
4. Make basic figures of people and animals.
5. Do finger painting.
6. Begin Indian scenes on frieze paper.
7. Illustrate Indian sign language.

Music

1. Rhythm band practice.
2. "Ten Little Indians."
3. "Indian Lullaby."

Science

1. Visit class tree to note changes since last visit.
2. List: "Things I Like to Touch" (arrange tray of these).
3. List: "Things I Like to Taste."
4. Arrange charts on changes in fall scene and signs of coming winter.

Health and safety

1. Inspect nails, teeth, and handkerchiefs.
2. Speak of dangers of playing ball in the street.

Afternoon reading

1. Group 1: Complete assigned seatwork.
2. Group 2: Begin assigned seatwork.
3. Group 3: Seatwork based on words in both primers on duplicated sheets:

True-False.

Completion.

4. Use basic flash card for drill.

5. Develop use of:

old funny

new pretty

big little

6. Give special attention to children needing help.

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January can be a rather drab month after all the Christmas festivities, but it can be a month for exciting and worth-while reading and science work in the first grade. Children are always intrigued by calendars. Typical first-grade children make two requests: "Show me my birthday on the calendar." "Show me when Santa Claus comes."

When the teacher consults the thermometer outside the classroom window and then reads the weather prediction from the morning paper, children begin to realize that while they can't do much about weather, they can read about it.

LESSON PLAN II: TIME AND WEATHER

January is a month that lends itself to the study of time and weather. During January, reading will be used as the chief interest in the class. Every phase of work will be drawn into this extensive reading plan.

Time

The teacher uses a demonstration clock and each child has a clock face on his desk.

1. Teach hours and half hours first.
2. Teach in units of five by this method:

Five after the hour and five of the hour

Ten after the hour and ten of the hour

Fifteen after the hour and fifteen of the hour (the concept of "quarter" comes easily later)

Twenty after the hour and twenty of the hour

Twenty-five after the hour and twenty-five of the hour

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- Hawthorn, Mildren Allen. *It's Time for Tommy*. Kenosha, Wis.: Samuel Lowe Company, 1953.
- Peter, John. *What Time Is It?* New York: Treasure Books, 1954.

Pupils should be encouraged to bring any discarded household clocks to class for demonstration purposes.

Science

1. Winter gardens: Watch plant and seeds grow. Bean seeds are easy to get and grow.

2. Snow: Use magnifying glass to see flakes. These are easily observed on black velvet where the six points can be counted without difficulty.

3. To observe how ice forms, freeze a block of water in a shallow pan outside the window.

4. Allow a small pail of snow to melt at room temperatures and observe the difference in volume.

5. Correlate date and weather charts:

This is January 5.

It is snowing.

This is January 6.

It is cold.

This is January 7.

It is sunny.

Number work**1. Teach**

six o'clock

five o'clock

two o'clock, and so on

2. Give oral drill on

the number before twenty

the number after twenty, and so on

3. Continue to build up number sense, using the words "bigger," "smaller," "older," and so on:

What is a bigger number than five?

What is a smaller number than ten?

4. Make a calendar to show number of days.**Health and safety****1. Time unit: Use clocks.****2. Sleds: Safety and fair play.****3. Snowballs: Talk with class on this subject.****Writing****1. Thank you notes to Mrs. Smith for the gingerbread men.****2. Short stories about the weather.****Correlate weather with:****1. Art**

a. a snowman

b. feeding birds

c. making clocks

d. chalk snow scene on black paper

e. work on ice skating frieze

2. Poetry (see Bibliography below)

"Bed in Summer," Robert Louis Stevenson

"Ice," Dorothy Aldis

"First Snow," Marie Louise Allen

"The Months," Sara Coleridge. This delightful little poem will integrate with number work, with months on the calendar, with science, or with the story of the seasons.

3. Stories (see Bibliography below)

"Little Bear Takes His Nap"

"Who Goes There?"

"Polar Bear Twins"

4. Music (see Bibliography below)

"Snow"

"Winter Song"

"Round the Clock"

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- Tompkins, Jane. "Polar Bear Twins" in *Children and Books*, p. 428.
- Wolfe, Irving, Beatrice Perham Krone, and Margaret Fullerton. *Music Round the Clock*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1955; "Round the Clock," pp. 4-5.
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- Wooley, Catherine. "Little Bear Takes a Nap" in *Read Me More Stories*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1900, pp. 24-29.

Reading

1. Give intensive drill on basic primer.
2. Give word drill morning and afternoon through games on board and seatwork directions. (These are listed at the end of this lesson plan.)
3. Complete individual booklets on "Snow and Ice." Send booklets home for additional reading.
4. Give review on all vocabulary taught in this seatwork.
5. Make reading the core of every activity without having children feel any undue pressure.
6. Encourage children to clip from magazines all words and sentences they know.
7. Have children read short stories from basic charts.
8. Write riddles about thing to eat, things to wear, things to play with.
9. Give individual instruction to slow readers.

January games**I. CARRYING OUT DIRECTIONS**

Child comes to front of room. Teacher writes two or three directions on the board. The child reads them silently, then carries out the directions:

Run to the door. Open the door. Hop to your chair.

The class watches carefully. If one child cannot perform, the chance is given to another.

Other directions might say:

Fly like an airplane three times around the room. Fly to your seat.

Another might say:

Jump up and down three times. Now hop to the piano. Walk to your seat.

As reading ability grows, more directions may be added.

II. LEARNING THE ALPHABET

By January, the child has accumulated a sight vocabulary of words. He may now be given a list of nouns to illustrate the alphabet:

a—apple	n—nest
b—boat	o—orange
c—cat	p—pen
d—dog	q—queen
e—egg	r—rat
f—fox	s—sand
g—goat	t—tent
h—horse	u—umbrella
i—ice	v—van
j—jam	w—wagon
k—kitten	x—xylophone
l—lamp	y—yard
m—mother	z—zebra

Each letter and word may be written and illustrated and the whole bound as a dictionary.

III. SEATWORK

January snow scenes or ice skating pictures may be used as seatwork:

Make a snowman.

Put a hat on the snowman.

Make a picture of five children skating on the lake.

The background built through oral discussion with a reading group makes the reading story a personal experience for the child. In developing a story about a trip to the zoo, the teacher helps the children visualize the planning that their mothers would do for such a trip, describes the route they would travel and the animals they might see. She also asks the children to describe the animals they would see and encourages them to compare the various animals. "It looks like a . . ." will be an oft-repeated refrain.

Pupils should be encouraged to repeat any humorous mistakes they once made in identifying animals.

A game can be based on one child's description of an animal, the rest of the group trying to guess it.

Appropriate music may be played on a record player or a piano to suggest an elephant walking or a kangaroo jumping.

The children should be encouraged to paint or model in clay the zoo animals they have been describing.

All these suggestions are appropriate for an approach to a story entitled "A Trip to the Zoo."

LESSON PLAN III: A TRIP TO THE ZOO¹

Preparation for introducing the story

1. A large picture of each of the following animals:

a giraffe	a cat	a hippopotamus
a rabbit	a zebra	a pig
a tiger	a pony	an elephant

2. A set of cards with the names of these animals printed on them.

3. Several picture books of zoo and farm animals.

4. If a trip to the zoo had been planned for the first grade, it should have been taken before this section in the primer is reached. The children will then have had an actual experience with unfamiliar animals.

5. Most kindergarten classes are equipped with toy farm and zoo animals. If these can be borrowed, the children will be able to handle as well as see and talk about them.

6. A film strip on "The Zoo" and one on "Farm Animals" should be shown. During the presentation of the film strip, have the children identify a pig, a pony, a cat, a rabbit, and the various zoo animals.

7. Discuss the title of the story "What Sally Saw."

¹ Based on "What Sally Saw" in *Fun with Dick and Jane* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1956). Primer I, pp. 140-146. This is a plan for one reading group only (one day: two periods).

8. Encourage silent reading of each page of the story and watch for children's aroused sense of humor.

9. Then have each page read aloud.

10. Call attention of the group to the oft-repeated phrase "It looks like . . ." Put similar phrases on the board or on a chart:

It looks like a rabbit to me.

It looks like a cat to me.

It looks like a pony to me.

It looks like a pig to me.

It looks like a tail to me.

11. Give the group an opportunity to match the tiger card to the toy tiger, the elephant card to the toy elephant, and so on.

12. Put all the zoo animals on one shelf of the bookcase and all the farm animals on another shelf.

13. Have two sheets of chart paper tacked up near the reading group. After reading the story write "FARM ANIMALS" on one and "ZOO ANIMALS" on the other. The children will then dictate the names to go on each sheet. Later, they may write these lists for manuscript writing and take them home to read.

14. "Now we will have a new story about Sally," you will say. To prevent memorization you have prepared a chart which reads somewhat differently from the book:

That is not a rabbit.

That is not a cat.

That is not a pony.

That is not a pig.

That is not a tail.

15. Later, on another day, reread the story "What Sally Saw" to really enjoy Sally's mistakes.

16. Poetry suggestions²

"The Elephant," Hilaire Belloc

"Funny Animals," Elizabeth Newall

"I Had a Little Pony," traditional

² *Child Craft* (Chicago: Field Enterprises, 1954), *Poems of Early Childhood*, I, 161, 160, 38.

LESSON PLAN IV: THE MUSIC BOX³**Preparation for the lesson**

1. Several music boxes which you can play and refer to as "tune boxes."

2. Suggest each time that the group listen to "the gay little tune."

3. A picture of a man in a toy shop has been placed conspicuously on the bulletin board and labeled "The Toy Mender."

Now the stage has been set for the story.

The group now reads the story silently.

1. Ask the children how often Alice visited the Toy Mender.

2. Explain and drill on

"every day."

another word for "happy" is "gay."

3. Discuss, explain, and develop comprehension of "here" and "hear."

Here is Alice. I hear a tune.

Here is Jerry. I hear a gay little tune.

4. Have the children read silently page 26 to find out why the Toy Mender cannot mend the broken box.

5. Then discuss page 27 to find out what Alice heard when she "stopped to look in at the open window":

Can you find where it says, "Something pretty, something gay"?
Put these phrases on the board as you develop the story.

6. Ask, "As she ran into the store, what did Alice hear?"

(The first two pages of the story are built up in this way.)

7. On page 28 the Toy Mender said, "That box works just like new." Ask the children to find where it is.

8. Find the place where he told Alice how to hear a tune. Read it.

9. Develop the entire phrase in reading:

"If you want to hear a tune just open the box.

1

2

It will play a gay little tune."

3

4

10. Ask the children, "Did Alice run home to show the box? Find the part that tells about this."

³ Based on Mabel O'Donnell, "The Tune Box" in *Round About: Basic First Reader* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson & Company, 1957), pp. 26-28. Lesson plan for one reading group (one session).

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It may seem irrelevant to have lesson plans containing number work, art, music, and science in a discussion of reading. One cannot isolate a portion of first-grade work and disregard the rest; one must view the entirety in order to evaluate properly the basic portion and its relationship to the whole.

A teacher works hard and spends time in preparation both before and after school. Charts take time; duplicated stories and poems take time—so do bulletin boards, preparations for trips, and lesson plans. All this is part of the job of teaching.

7

Day by Day in the Classroom: Developing Interests

When a beloved teacher expresses a wish for something, the children are apt to try to get it for her if they can.

Miss Robbins sighed as she looked about her room one bleak March morning. It seemed to lack something. True, there were brightly colored picture books in the library corner, and gold fish swam in the bowl in the science corner and there were jars of red and yellow finger paint in the art corner—but the room was drab somehow.

It needed something else, and she remarked aloud "We really should have some flowers to make things more cheerful, shouldn't we? I shall have to think of a way to get them for our room and then we can all enjoy them."

Alice heard this and began to think very hard, for she loved Miss Robbins. And as Alice thought, the solution came—and it was so easy. She had seen it only yesterday and admired its glossy leaves and pink blossoms; now if she hurried through her lunch it might be just possible to bring her gift to the teacher by afternoon. She would be pleased to have the flowers so very soon.

When Alice came in after lunch she found Miss Robbins at her desk writing. The little girl was almost hidden beneath her burden as she struggled smilingly across the floor and thrust the flowers on top of the papers on the desk and panted, "They're for you!" and waited for her teacher to smile.

Miss Robbins took a deep breath. She ran her fingers over the shiny green leaves and the pink wax roses of the wreath and smoothed the lavender ribbon with gold letters that said "IN LOVING MEMORY." She looked at Alice's expectant six-year-old face with the smear of chocolate around the mouth and the scratch on the cheek and the faint blue shadows under the eyes and felt that she loved teaching very much—and smiled, a very big, sincere, and loving smile.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEACHER

A good teacher is necessarily a versatile person—and a loving person. The lack of either quality can make a teacher basically unfitted for her job.

As for versatility—she must meet the changing needs of thirty children every day so that they are led, not forced, into paths of righteousness. A teacher is an actress in that same sense, for if she sees in the faces before her only blank expressions, she must shift tactics in order to get her point across. What works once may not work twice; muscles get cramped so an activity is in order; change of pace comes at fifteen-minute intervals. She is a veritable miracle worker. "Teach the individual child"; "Take the child where you find him and teach"—these are the slogans of the profession. But grim reality has fast and slow children, physical defects, emotional upsets, neurotic parents, school law, registers, report cards, anecdotal records, assembly programs, parents' teas, milk money, lunch and playground duty, pupil banking, and faculty meetings. And it will be an unusual first-grade teacher who does not find herself in the middle of heated controversies on the proper way to teach reading—sight recognition versus phonics.

Also, a teacher must be a loving person, for she needs to love the child in order to understand him and his problems. Some children may seem almost intolerably dirty and rude to a casual observer, but to the understanding teacher they may be quite different. Civility and cleanliness may take a long time to establish through example and praise; rudeness can stem from fear or from trouble in the home. A teacher needs to know



when to overlook naughtiness, when to soothe with a quiet touch of her hand, when to smile encouragingly, when to praise, and when to be stern. She must love sufficiently to punish justly, and children instinctively recognize this and accept it—almost expect it.

THE WELL-ORDERED ROOM

A first-grade teacher will often be busy with a reading group in the front of the room while the rest of the class will be occupied with various designated activities. All of this sounds easy; the only difficult part is helping those children *beforehand* so that they feel secure in what they are doing and refrain from constantly coming up to ask questions of the teacher.

Bathroom permissions constitute one of these annoyances. An experienced teacher solved this problem by having a small brightly painted wooden boat with a brass loop on the top. Whenever a child needed to leave the room he hung the little boat on a hook and when he returned, he replaced it on the desk. The teacher was able to tell at a glance whether a child was out of the room or not and a further check would indicate which one.

The four corners of the room were meant to be helpful to children and teacher alike, and to serve constantly as a source of independent learning activity. No corner of a first-grade room should stand empty—ever. The teacher's desk is located elsewhere, as is the reading circle; the pupils' desks are in the center.

The science corner

The science corner, with its magnet, pets, plants, aquarium, and terrarium, gives ample opportunity to experiment and observe. Even though the results are elementary, observations lead to questioning. Only through exposures to a variety of things do children develop cumulative curiosity that leads to intellectual growth.

The art corner

The art corner, with its easel, paints, modeling clay, and crayons, leads to an enjoyment of colors, textures, and sizes. There is relaxation in the very act of creating; in the combinations of bright colors, the squishy feeling of finger paint, the soft obedience of clay. Many a child will sit absorbed with his investigations of color and texture and in commenting on what he has done afterward, the teacher may glimpse the fascinating depths of a six-year-old mind. She has learned always to inquire about amateur art

by saying, "And what is that?" which avoids leading the child's mind to an adult conclusion and permits him a free interpretation of his own.

Little Johnnie was drawing a picture of Indians, but above them he had painted an indistinct, birdlike object that defied casual identification. His teacher pointed to the upper part of the picture, "And what is that, Johnnie?" His reply was candid and prompt. "That's the little Lord Jesus all dressed up in his Indian suit looking down on all the other big Indians on the ground." There was nothing more to be said. Like everything else in teaching, a youngster's mind can offer the charm of simple faith under the most prosaic of circumstances.

The play corner

How can the play corner contribute to the child's vocabulary? Family life, as dramatized with toy dishes, stoves, baby carriages, and dolls, may lead to much conversation. The children have observed how their mothers visit neighbors and Daddy invites friends home to dinner. The tone of voice "Mother" employs in her conversations with "Daddy," her correct or incorrect language usage, the interests reflected in "Daddy's" conversation with his dinner friends—all help to evaluate the child's language background, and aid in understanding him as well.

The library corner

The library corner, with its tables, chairs, bookshelves, and picture books, is the spot where many language arts habits begin. Sitting quietly and studying pictures, finding familiar characters in books, chuckling over beloved stories: these lay the foundations for a future love of books.

This corner can be separated from the class by a low bookcase. It may be furnished with a bright scatter rug, a few comfortable children's chairs that are more like home chairs than school furniture, a reading lamp, and a convenient table. The books are often changed so that there is always something new to read and look at for all levels of ability.

With a reading group near the blackboard, the four corners of the room happy and busy, the little boat hung on the hook, and children busy at their desks—any first-grade room can be a happy learning situation, rain or shine, and a busy contented class makes a happy teacher who has planned well and is pleased with the results.

CONTACTS WITH PARENTS

Parents expect that their children will learn to read in the first grade. Unless parents know something about the teacher and she knows something

about them, her task will be harder than it should be. The child you teach is loaned to the teacher for certain hours of each day and she may become very fond of that youngster through his very dependence, but he will always belong to his parents. He is the product of their wisdom or their prejudices, and he is compounded of heredity and environment. Parents cannot be ignored; they are a part of every pupil in every classroom.

Some parents will come to the teacher without a formal invitation because they are concerned. She must resist the temptation to make sweeping generalities about first-grade reading and to give home remedies for school difficulties. When parents have said what they have come to say, the teacher may add a few comments and suggestions, but she will have learned a great deal by just keeping quiet.

Early in the school year is a good time for the teacher to meet the children's parents, perhaps by inviting them to a first-grade tea. If it seems desirable to the teacher to say a few words, she should not explain reading techniques to the group. She is the reading expert; and she is neither teaching the parents to supplement her work nor giving them a standard by which she may be compared. She may talk in terms of a general philosophy but she should leave out specific details.

The tea offers an opportunity for parents' "homework," put in friendly fashion:

1. The child needs plenty of outdoor exercise. First-grade reading requires a relaxed child.

2. Plenty of sleep. Parents should turn off TV programs at a reasonable bedtime hour. First-grade reading requires a rested child.

3. Saturdays and holidays are good times for trips that help the child to understand stories in the primers and first reader, such as a trip to the zoo, a train ride, or a trip to the airport.

4. Parents might like to have a list of books to read to a first-grader at home. This can be an excellent learning experience and incidental reading stimulus.

5. It would be helpful if parents would use manuscript writing for labels and notes to their six-year-olds. One wise teacher prepared mimeographed sheets with the large and small manuscript alphabet for parents' use, and presented them at her class tea so that each mother could have a sample at home.

6. Parents should be advised to give praise and show optimistic interest whenever there is *any* evidence at home of reading progress.

A teacher may safely assume that parents are interested in the welfare of their children. They are glad to have a teacher tell them whenever she suspects any defects in seeing or hearing, or feels a child should have a thorough physical examination. Information of this kind usually comes

to the teacher after a child has been examined by the school nurse or the school doctor.

Upon occasion mimeographed notices in manuscript writing will go home with the children; by their construction they show something of the reading techniques of the classroom:

1. Milk is 25¢. Please send money Monday.
2. Bring clothespin for galoshes.
3. Come see our play on Friday at 2.
4. I am thankful for Mother.
I am thankful for Father.
I am thankful for my house.
I am thankful for my toys.
5. We put water in a pan.
We put it outdoors.
Then we had ice.

Short original stories told by the teacher in class and poetry spoken in chorus may go home later in the year, as well as a short newspaper about first-grade happenings. The newspaper is usually copied from wall charts dictated and illustrated by the children. If everything is printed, delivered, and read by the first-grade child, his parents will be less concerned about his progress, for they will know that he is learning to read.

All teachers are concerned with their pupils' progress and ultimate success. They try to, as Gilbert Highet suggests, "make every lesson vivid, relevant and memorable." How then, does the assignment of the teacher of beginning reading differ from that of other teachers? She is concerned with the ultimate results but it is her responsibility to teach so that the skill upon which all the child's future depends is thoroughly introduced. The term "introduced" is used deliberately, for all the teachers who follow in the elementary school have the same responsibility. Reading begins in the first grade, but it must be continued throughout the elementary school as a daily subject and not as a part-time assignment.

Beginning reading must be taught with meticulous care and daily planning. The failure of a teacher in the first grade may well mean the failure of a child for years to come.

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372
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